

THE RICE INSTITUTE PAMPHLET

Vol. II

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No. 4



Published by

THE RICE INSTITUTE

A university of liberal and technical learning
founded by William Marsh Rice in the City of
Houston, Texas, and dedicated by him to
the advancement of Letters, Science, and Art

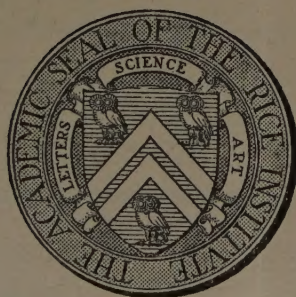


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CONTENTS

THE BREVIARY OF ÆSTHETIC—A lecture prepared for the inauguration of the Rice Institute, by Senator Benedetto Croce, Life Senator of the Italian King- dom, Member of several Royal Commissions, Editor of “La Critica.”	PAGE
I. “What is Art?”	223
II. Prejudices Relating to Art	251
III. The Place of Art in the Spirit and in Human Society	273
IV. Criticism and the History of Art	292

THE BREVIARY OF ÆSTHETIC¹

I

"WHAT IS ART?"

IN reply to the question, "What is art?", it might be said jocosely (but this would not be a bad joke) that art is what everybody knows it to be. And indeed, if it were not to some extent known what it is, it would be impossible even to ask that question, for every question implies a certain knowledge of what is asked about, designated in the question and therefore known and qualified. A proof of this is to be found in the fact that we often hear expressed just and profound ideas in relation to art by those who make no profession of philosophy or of theory, by laymen, by artists who do not like to reason, by the ingenuous, and even by the common people: these ideas are sometimes implicit in judgments concerning particular works of art, but at others assume altogether the form of aphorisms and of definitions. Thus it happens that there arises the belief in the possibility of making blush, at will, any proud philosopher who should believe himself to have "discovered" the nature of art, by placing before his eyes or making ring in his ears propositions taken from the most superficial books or phrases of the most ordinary conversation, and shewing that they already most clearly contained his vaunted discovery.

And in this case the philosopher would have good reason to blush—that is, had he ever nourished the illusion of introducing into universal human consciousness, by means of his

¹ A lecture prepared for the inauguration of the Rice Institute, by Benedetto Croce, Senator of the Kingdom of Italy, Member of several Royal Commissions, Editor of "La Critica." Translated from the Italian by Douglas Ainslie, B.A. Oxon., of The Athenæum, London, England.

doctrines, something altogether original, something extraneous to this consciousness, the revelation of an altogether new world. But he does not blush, and continues upon his way, for he is not ignorant that the question as to what is art (as indeed every philosophical question as to the nature of the real, or in general every question of knowledge), even if by its use of language it seem to assume the aspect of a general and total problem, which it is claimed to solve for the first and last time, has always, as a matter of fact, a *circumscribed* meaning, referable to the particular difficulties that assume vitality at a determined moment in the history of thought. Certainly, truth does walk the streets, like the *esprit* of the well-known French proverb, or like metaphor, "queen of tropes" according to rhetoricians, which Montaigne discovered in the *babil* of his *chambrière*. But the metaphor used by the maid is the solution of a problem of expression proper to the feelings that affect the maid at that moment; and the obvious affirmations that by accident or intent one hears every day as to the nature of art, are solutions of logical problems, as they present themselves to this or that individual, who is not a philosopher by profession, and yet as man is also to some extent a philosopher. And as the maid's metaphor usually expresses but a small and vulgar world of feeling compared with that of the poet, so the obvious affirmation of one who is not a philosopher solves a problem small by comparison with that which occupies the philosopher. The answer as to what is art may appear similar in both cases, but is different in both cases owing to the different degree of richness of its intimate content; because the answer of the philosopher worthy of the name has neither more nor less than the task of solving in an adequate manner all the problems as to the nature of art that have arisen down to that moment in the course of history;

whereas that of the layman, since it revolves in a far narrower space, shews itself to be impotent outside those limits. Actual proof of this is also to be found in the force of the eternal Socratic method, in the facility with which the learned, by pressing home their questions, leave those without learning in open-mouthed confusion, though these had nevertheless begun by speaking well; but now finding themselves, in the course of the inquiry, in danger of losing what small knowledge they possessed, they have no resource but to retire into their shell, declaring that they do not like "subtleties."

The philosopher's pride is solely based therefore upon the greater intensity of his questions and answers; a pride not unaccompanied with modesty—that is, with the consciousness that if his sphere be wider, or the largest possible, at a determined moment, yet it is limited by the history of that moment, and cannot pretend to a value of totality, or what is called a *definite* solution. The ulterior life of the spirit, renewing and multiplying problems, does not so much falsify, as render inadequate preceding solutions, part of them falling among the number of those truths that are understood, and part needing to be again taken up and integrated. A system is a house, which, as soon as it has been built and decorated, has need of continuous labour, more or less energetic, in order to keep it in repair (subject as it is to the corrosive action of the elements); and at a certain moment there is no longer any use in restoring and propping up the system, we must demolish and reconstruct it from top to bottom. But with this capital difference: that in the work of thought, the perpetually new house is perpetually maintained by the old one, which persists in it, almost by an act of magic. As we know, those superficial or ingenuous souls that are ignorant of this magic are terrified at it; so much so,

that one of their tiresome refrains against philosophy is that it continually undoes its work, and that one philosopher contradicts another: as though man did not always make and unmake his houses, and as though the architect that follows did not always contradict the architect that precedes; and as though it were possible to draw the conclusion from this making and unmaking of houses and from this contradiction among architects, that it is useless to make houses!

The answers of the philosopher, though they have the advantage of greater intensity, also carry with them the dangers of greater error, and are often vitiated by a sort of lack of good sense, which has an aristocratic character, in so far as it belongs to a superior sphere of culture, and even when meriting reproof, is the object not only of disdain and derision, but also of secret envy and admiration. This is the foundation of the contrast, that many delight to illustrate, between the mental equilibrium of ordinary people and the extravagances of philosophers; since, for example, it is clear that no man of good sense would have said that art is a reflexion of the sexual instinct, or that it is something maleficent and deserves to be banned from well-ordered republics. These absurdities have, however, been uttered by philosophers and even by great philosophers. But the innocence of the man of common sense is poverty, the innocence of the savage; and though there have often been sighs for the life of the savage, and a remedy has been called for to rescue good sense from philosophies, it remains a fact that the spirit, in its development, courageously affronts the dangers of civilisation and the momentary loss of good sense. The researches of the philosopher in relation to art must tread the paths of error in order to find the path of truth, which does not differ from, but is, those very paths of error which contain a clue to the labyrinth.

The close connection of error and truth arises from the fact that a complete and total error is inconceivable, and, since it is inconceivable, does not exist. Error speaks with two voices, one of which affirms the false, but the other denies it; it is a colliding of yes and no, which is called contradiction. Therefore, when we descend from general considerations to the examination of a theory that has been condemned as erroneous in its definite particulars, we find the cure in the theory itself—that is, the true theory, which grows out of the soil of error. Thus it happens that those very people who claim to reduce art to the sexual instinct, in order to demonstrate their thesis have recourse to arguments and meditations which, instead of uniting, separate art from that instinct; or that he who would expel poetry from the well-constituted republic, shudders in so doing, and himself creates a new and sublime poetry. There have been historical periods in which the most crude and perverted doctrines of art have dominated; yet this did not prevent the habitual and secure separation of the beautiful from the ugly at those periods, nor the very subtle discussion of the theme when the abstract theory was forgotten and particular cases were studied. Error is always condemned, not by the mouth of the judge, but *ex ore suo*.

Owing to this close connection with error, the affirmation of the truth is always a process of strife, by means of which it keeps freeing itself in error from error; whence arises another pious but impossible desire, namely, that which demands that truth should be directly exposed, without discussion or polemic; that it should be permitted to proceed majestically alone upon its way: as if this stage parade were the symbol suited to truth, which is thought itself, and, as thought, ever active and in labour. Indeed, nobody succeeds in exposing a truth, save by criticising the different solutions

of the problem with which it is connected; and there is no philosophical treatise, however weak, no little scholastic manual or academic dissertation, which does not collect at its beginning or contain in its body a review of opinions, historically given or ideally possible, which it wishes to oppose or to correct. This fact, though frequently realised in a capricious and disorderly manner, just expresses the legitimate desire to pass in review all the solutions that have been attempted in history or are possible of achievement in idea (that is, at the present moment, though always in history), in such a way that the new solution shall include in itself all the preceding labour of the human spirit.

But this demand is a *logical* demand, and as such intrinsic to every true thought and inseparable from it; and we must not confound it with a definite literary form of exposition, in order that we may not fall into the pedantry for which the scholastics of the Middle Ages and the dialecticians of the school of Hegel in the nineteenth century became celebrated, which is very closely connected with the formalistic superstition, and represents a belief in the marvellous virtue of a certain sort of extrinsic and mechanical philosophical exposition. We must, in short, understand it in a substantial, not in an accidental sense, respecting the spirit, not the letter, and proceed with freedom in the exposition of our own thought, according to time, place, and person. Thus, in these rapid lectures intended to provide as it were a guide to the right way of thinking out problems of art, I shall carefully refrain from narrating (as I have done elsewhere) the whole process of liberation from erroneous conceptions of art, mounting upwards from the poorest to the richest; and I shall cast far away, not from myself, but from my readers, a part of the baggage with which they will charge themselves when, prompted thereto by the sight of

the country passed over in our bird's flight, they shall set themselves to accomplish more particular voyages in this or that part of it, or to cross it again from end to end.

However, connecting the question which has given occasion to this indispensable prologue (indispensable for the purpose of removing from my discourse every appearance of pretentiousness, and also all blemish of inutility),—the question as to what is art,—I will say at once, in the simplest manner, that art is *vision* or *intuition*. The artist produces an image or a phantasm; and he who enjoys art turns his gaze upon the point to which the artist has pointed, looks through the chink which he has opened, and reproduces that image in himself. “Intuition,” “vision,” “contemplation,” “imagination,” “fancy,” “figurations,” “representations,” and so on, are words continually recurring, like synonyms, when discoursing upon art, and they all lead the mind to the same conceptual sphere which indicates general agreement.

But this reply, that art is intuition, obtains its force and meaning from all that it implicitly denies and from which it distinguishes art. What negations are implicit in it? I shall indicate the principal, or at least those that are the most important for us at this present moment of our culture.

It denies, above all, that art is a *physical fact*: for example, certain determined colours, or relations of colours; certain definite forms of bodies; certain definite sounds, or relations of sounds; certain phenomena of heat or of electricity—in short, whatsoever be designated as “physical.” The inclination toward this error of physicising art is already present in ordinary thought, and as children who touch the soap-bubble and would wish to touch the rainbow, so the human spirit, admiring beautiful things, hastens spontaneously to trace out the reasons for them in external nature, and proves that it must think, or believes that it

should think, certain colours beautiful and certain other colours ugly, certain forms beautiful and certain other forms ugly. But this attempt has been carried out intentionally and with method on several occasions in the history of thought: from the "canons" which the Greek theoreticians and artists fixed for the beauty of bodies, through the speculations as to the geometrical and numerical relations of figures and sounds, down to the researches of the æstheticians of the nineteenth century (Fechner, for example), and to the "communications" presented in our day by the inexpert, at philosophical, psychological, and natural science congresses, concerning the relations of physical phenomena with art. And if it be asked why art cannot be a physical fact, we must reply, in the first place, that physical facts *do not possess reality*, and that art, to which so many devote their whole lives and which fills all with a divine joy, is *supremely real*; thus it cannot be a physical fact, which is something unreal. This sounds at first paradoxical, for nothing seems more solid and secure to the ordinary man than the physical world; but we, in the seat of truth, must not abstain from the good reason and substitute for it one less good, solely because the first should have the appearance of a lie; and besides, in order to surpass what of strange and difficult may be contained in that truth, to become at home with it, we may take into consideration the fact that the demonstration of the unreality of the physical world has not only been proved in an indisputable manner and is admitted by all philosophers (who are not crass materialists and are not involved in the strident contradictions of materialism), but is professed by these same physicists in the spontaneous philosophy which they mingle with their physics, when they conceive physical phenomena as products of principles that are beyond experience, of atoms or of ether,

or as the manifestation of an Unknowable: besides, the matter itself of the materialists is a supermaterial principle. Thus physical facts reveal themselves, by their internal logic and by common consent, not as reality, but as a *construction of our intellect for the purposes of science*. Consequently, the question whether art be a physical fact must rationally assume this different signification: that is to say, *whether it be possible to construct art physically*. And this is certainly possible, for we indeed carry it out always, when, turning from the sense of a poem and ceasing to enjoy it, we set ourselves, for example, to count the words of which the poem is composed and to divide them into syllables and letters; or, disregarding the æsthetic effect of a statue, we weigh and measure it: a most useful performance for the packers of statues, as is the other for the typographers who have to “compose” pages of poetry; but most useless for the contemplator and student of art, to whom it is neither useful nor licit to allow himself to be “distracted” from his proper object. Thus art is not a physical fact in this second sense, either; which amounts to saying that when we propose to ourselves to penetrate its nature and mode of action, to construct it physically is of no avail.

Another negation is implied in the definition of art as intuition: if it be intuition, and intuition is equivalent to *theory* in the original sense of contemplation, art cannot be a utilitarian act; and since a utilitarian act aims always at obtaining a pleasure and therefore at keeping off a pain, art, considered in its own nature, has nothing to do with the *useful* and with *pleasure* and *pain*, as such. It will be admitted, indeed, without much difficulty, that a pleasure as a pleasure, any sort of pleasure, is not of itself artistic; the pleasure of a drink of water that slakes thirst, or a walk in the open air that stretches our limbs and makes our blood

circulate more lightly, or the obtaining of a longed-for post that settles us in practical life, and so on, is not artistic. Finally, the difference between pleasure and art leaps to the eyes in the relations that are developed between ourselves and works of art, because the figure represented may be dear to us and represent the most delightful memories, and at the same time the picture may be ugly; or, on the other hand, the picture may be beautiful and the figure represented hateful to our hearts, or the picture itself, which we approve as beautiful, may also cause us rage and envy, because it is the work of our enemy or rival, for whom it will procure advantage and on whom it will confer new strength: our practical interests, with their relative pleasures and pains, mingle and sometimes become confused with art and disturb, but are never *identified* with, our æsthetic interest. At the most it will be affirmed, with a view to maintaining more effectively the definition of art as the pleasurable, that it is not the pleasurable in general, but a *particular* form of the pleasurable. But such a restriction is no longer a defence, it is indeed an abandonment of that thesis; for given that art is a particular form of pleasure, its distinctive character would be supplied, not by the pleasurable, but by what distinguishes that pleasurable from other pleasurables, and it would be desirable to turn the attention to that distinctive element—more than pleasurable or different from pleasurable. Nevertheless, the doctrine that defines art as the pleasurable has a special denomination (hedonistic æsthetic), and a long and complicated development in the history of æsthetic doctrines: it shewed itself in the Græco-Roman world, prevailed in the eighteenth century, reflowered in the second half of the nineteenth, and still enjoys much favour, being especially well received by beginners in æsthetic, who are above all struck by the fact that art causes pleasure. The life of this

doctrine has consisted of proposing in turn one or another class of pleasures, or several classes together (the pleasure of the superior senses, the pleasure of play, of consciousness of our own strength, of criticism, etc., etc.), or of adding to it elements differing from the pleasurable, the useful for example (when understood as distinct from the pleasurable), the satisfaction of cognoscitive and moral wants, and the like. And its progress has been caused just by this restlessness, and by its allowing foreign elements to ferment in its bosom, which it introduces through the necessity of somehow bringing itself into agreement with the reality of art, thus attaining to its dissolution as hedonistic doctrine and to the promotion of a new doctrine, or at least to drawing attention to its necessity. And since every error has its element of truth (and that of the physical doctrine has been seen to be the possibility of the physical “construction” of art as of any other fact), the hedonistic doctrine has its eternal element of truth in the placing in relief the hedonistic accompaniment, or pleasure, common to the æsthetic activity as to every form of spiritual activity, which it has not at all been intended to deny in absolutely denying the identification of art with the pleasurable, and in distinguishing it from the pleasurable by defining it as intuition.

A third negation, effected by means of the theory of art as intuition, is that art is a *moral act*; that is to say, that form of practical act which, although necessarily uniting with the useful and with pleasure and pain, is not immediately utilitarian and hedonistic, and moves in a superior spiritual sphere. But the intuition, in so far as it is a theoretic act, is opposed to the practical of any sort. And in truth, art, as has been remarked from the earliest times, does not arise as an act of the will; good will, which constitutes the honest man, does not constitute the artist. And since it is not the result of an

act of will, so it escapes all moral discrimination, not because a privilege of exemption is accorded to it, but simply because moral discrimination cannot be applied to art. An artistic image portrays an act morally praiseworthy or blameworthy; but this image, as image, is neither morally praiseworthy nor blameworthy. Not only is there no penal code that can condemn an image to prison or to death, but no moral judgment, uttered by a rational person, can make of it its object: we might just as well judge the square moral or the triangle immoral as the Francesca of Dante immoral or the Cordelia of Shakespeare moral, for these have a purely artistic function, they are like musical notes in the souls of Dante and of Shakespeare. Further, the moralistic theory of art is also represented in the history of æsthetic doctrines, though much discredited in the common opinion of our times, not only on account of its intrinsic demerit, but also, in some measure, owing to the moral demerit of certain tendencies of our times, which render possible, owing to psychological dislike, that refutation of it which should be made—and which we here make—solely for logical reasons. The end attributed to art, of directing the good and inspiring horror of evil, of correcting and ameliorating customs, is a derivation of the moralistic doctrine; and so is the demand addressed to artists to collaborate in the education of the lower classes, in the strengthening of the national or bellicose spirit of a people, in the diffusion of the ideals of a modest and laborious life; and so on. These are all things that art cannot do, any more than geometry, which, however, does not lose anything of its importance on account of its inability to do this; and one does not see why art should do so, either. That it cannot do these things was partially perceived by the moralistic æstheticians also; who very readily effected a transaction with it, permitting it to provide pleasures that

were not moral, provided they were not openly dishonest, or recommending it to employ to a good end the dominion that, owing to its hedonistic power, it possessed over souls, to gild the pill, to sprinkle sweetness upon the rim of the glass containing the bitter draught—in short, to play the courtesan (since it could not get rid of its old and inborn habits), in the service of holy church or of morality: *meretrix ecclesiæ*. On other occasions they have sought to avail themselves of it for purposes of instruction, since not only virtue but also science is a difficult thing, and art could remove this difficulty and render pleasant and attractive the entrance into the ocean of science—indeed, lead them through it as through a garden of Armida, gaily and voluptuously, without their being conscious of the lofty protection they had obtained, or of the crisis of renovation which they were preparing for themselves. We cannot now refrain from a smile when we talk of these theories, but should not forget that they were once a serious matter corresponding to a serious effort to understand the nature of art and to elevate the conception of it; and that among those who believed in it (to limit ourselves to Italian literature) were Dante and Tasso, Parini and Alfieri, Manzoni and Mazzini. And the moralistic doctrine of art was and is and will be perpetually beneficial by its very contradictions; it was and will be an effort, however unhappy, to separate art from the merely pleasing, with which it is sometimes confused, and to assign to it a more worthy post: and it, too, has its true side, because, if art be beyond morality, the artist is neither this side of it nor that, but under its empire, in so far as he is a man who cannot withdraw himself from the duties of man, and must look upon art itself—art, which is not and never will be moral—as a mission to be exercised as a priestly office.

Again (and this is the last and perhaps the most important of all the general negations that it suits me to recall in relation to this matter), with the definition of art as intuition, we deny that it has the character of *conceptual knowledge*. Conceptual knowledge, in its true form, which is the philosophical, is always realistic, aiming at establishing reality against unreality, or at lowering unreality by including it in reality as a subordinate moment of reality itself. But intuition means, precisely, indistinction of reality and unreality, the image with its value as mere image, the pure ideality of the image; and opposing the intuitive or sensible knowledge to the conceptual or intelligible, the æsthetic to the noetic, it aims at claiming the autonomy of this more simple and elementary form of knowledge, which has been compared to the dream (the dream, and not the sleep) of the theoretic life, in respect to which philosophy would be the waking. And indeed, whoever should ask, when examining a work of art, whether what the artist has expressed be metaphysically and historically true or false, asks a question that is without meaning, and commits an error analogous to his who should bring the airy images of the fancy before the tribunal of morality: without meaning, because the discrimination of true and false always concerns an affirmation of reality, or a judgment, but it cannot fall under the head of an image or of a pure subject, which is not the subject of a judgment, since it is without qualification or predicate. It is useless to object that the individuality of the image cannot subsist without reference to the universal, of which that image is the individuation, because we do not here deny that the universal, as the spirit of God, is everywhere and animates all things with itself, but we deny that the universal is rendered logically explicit and is thought in the intuition. Useless also is the appeal to the principle

of the unity of the spirit, which is not broken, but, on the contrary, strengthened by the clear distinction of fancy from thought, because from the distinction comes opposition, and from opposition concrete unity.

Ideality (as has also been called this character that distinguishes the intuition from the concept, art from philosophy and from history, from the affirmation of the universal and from the perception or narration of what has happened) is the intimate virtue of art: no sooner are reflection and judgment developed from that ideality, than art is dissipated and dies: it dies in the artist, who becomes a critic; it dies in the contemplator, who changes from an entranced enjoyer of art to a meditative observer of life.

But the distinction of art from philosophy (taken widely as including all thinking of the real) brings with it other distinctions, among which that of art from *myth* occupies the foremost place. For myth, to him who believes in it, presents itself as the revelation and knowledge of reality as opposed to unreality,—a reality that drives away other beliefs as illusory or false. It can become art only for him who no longer believes in it and avails himself of mythology as a metaphor, of the austere world of the gods as of a beautiful world, of God as of an image of sublimity. Considered, then, in its genuine reality, in the soul of the believer and not of the unbeliever, it is religion and not simple fancy; and religion is philosophy, philosophy in process of becoming, philosophy more or less imperfect, but philosophy, as philosophy is religion, more or less purified and elaborated, in continuous process of elaboration and purification, but religion or thought of the Absolute or Eternal. Art lacks the thought that is necessary ere it can become myth and religion, and the faith that is born of thought; the artist neither believes nor disbelieves in his image: he produces

it. And, for a different reason, the concept of art as intuition excludes, on the other hand, the conception of art as the production of *classes and types, species and genera*, or again (as a great mathematician and philosopher had occasion to say of music), as an exercise of unconscious *arithmetic*; that is, it distinguishes art from the positive sciences and from mathematics, in both of which appears the conceptual form, though without realistic character, as mere general representation or mere abstraction. But that ideality which natural and mathematical science would seem to assume, as opposed to the world of philosophy, of religion and of history, and which would seem to approximate it to art (and owing to which scientists and mathematicians of our day are so ready to boast of creating worlds, of *fictions*, resembling the fictions and figurations of the poets, even in their vocabulary), is gained with the renunciation of concrete thought, by means of generalisation and abstraction, which are capricious, volitional decisions, practical acts, and, as practical acts, extraneous and inimical to the world of art. Thus it happens that art manifests much more repugnance toward the positive and mathematical sciences than toward philosophy, religion and history, because these seem to it to be fellow-citizens of the same world of theory or of knowledge, whereas those others shock it with the brutality toward contemplation of the practical world. Poetry and classification, and, worse still, poetry and mathematics, appear to be as little in agreement as fire and water: the *esprit mathématique* and the *esprit scientifique*, the most declared enemies of the *esprit poétique*; those periods in which the natural sciences and mathematics prevail (for example, the intellectualism of the eighteenth century) seem to be the least fruitful in poetry.

And since this vindication of the alogical character of art

is, as I have said, the most difficult and important of the negations included in the formula of art-intuition, the theories that attempt to explain art as philosophy, as religion, as history, or as science, and in a lesser degree as mathematics, occupy the greater part of the history of æsthetic science and are adorned with the names of the greatest philosophers. Schelling and Hegel afford examples of the identification or confusion of art with religion and philosophy in the eighteenth century; Taine, of its confusion with the natural sciences; the theories of the French verists, of its confusion with historical and documentary observation; the formalism of the Herbartians, of its confusion with mathematics. But it would be vain to seek pure examples of these errors in any of these authors and in the others that might be mentioned, because error is never pure, for if it were so, it would be truth. Thus the doctrines of art that for the sake of brevity I shall term “conceptualistic” contain elements of dissolution, the more copious and efficacious by as much as the spirit of the philosopher who professed them was energetic, and therefore nowhere are they so copious and efficacious as in Schelling and Hegel, who thus had so lively a consciousness of artistic production as to suggest by their observations and their particular developments a theory opposed to that maintained in their systems. Furthermore, the very conceptualistic theories are superior to the others previously examined, not only in so far as they recognise the *theoretic* character of art, but also carry with them their contribution to the true doctrine, owing to the claim that they make for a determination of the relations (which, if they be of distinction, are also of unity) between fancy and logic, between art and thought.

And here we can already see how the simplest formula, that “art is intuition,”—which, translated into other sym-

bolical terms (for example, that "art is the work of fancy"), is to be found in the mouths of all those who daily discuss art, and is to be found in older terms ("imitation," "fiction," "fable," etc.) in so many old books,—pronounced now in the text of a philosophical discourse, becomes filled with a historical, critical, and polemical content, of which I can hardly here give any example. And it will no longer cause astonishment that its philosophical conquest should have cost an especially great amount of toil, because that conquest is like setting foot upon a little hill long fought for in battle. Its easy ascent by the thoughtless pedestrian in time of peace is a very different matter; it is not a simple resting-place on a walk, but the symbol and result of the victory of an army. The historian of æsthetic follows the steps of its difficult progress, in which (and this is another magical act of thought) the conqueror, instead of losing strength through the blows that his adversary inflicts upon him, acquires new strength through these very blows, and reaches the sighed-for eminence, repulsing his adversary, and yet in his company. Here I cannot do more than record in passing the importance of the Aristotelian concept of *mimesis* (arising in opposition to the Platonic condemnation of poetry), and the attempt made by the same philosopher to distinguish *poetry* and *history*: a concept that was not sufficiently developed, and perhaps not altogether mature in his mind, and therefore long misunderstood, but which was yet to serve, after many centuries, as the point of departure for modern æsthetic thought. And I will mention in passing the ever-increasing consciousness of the difference between *logic* and *fancy*, between *judgment* and *taste*, between *intellect* and *genius*, which became ever more lively during the course of the seventeenth century, and the solemn form which the contest between *Poetry* and *Metaphysic* assumed in the "Scienza

Nuova” of Vico; and also the scholastic construction of an *Æsthetica*, distinct from a *Logica*, as *Gnoseologia inferior* and *Scientia cognitionis sensitivæ*, in Baumgarten, who, however, remained involved in the conceptualistic conception of art, and did not carry out his project; and the Critique of Kant directed against Baumgarten and all the Leibnitzians and Wolffians, which made it clear that intuition is intuition and not a “confused concept”; and romanticism, which perhaps better developed the new idea of art, announced by Vico, in its artistic criticism and in its histories than in its systems; and, finally, the criticism inaugurated in Italy by Francesco de Sanctis, who caused art as pure *form*, or pure intuition, to prevail over all utilitarianism, moralism, and conceptualism (to adopt his vocabulary).

But doubt springs up at the feet of truth, “like a young shoot,”—as the *terzina* of father Dante has it,—doubt, which is what drives the intellect of man “from mount to mount.” The doctrine of art as intuition, as fancy, as form, now gives rise to an ulterior (I have not said an “ultimate”) problem, which is no longer one of opposition and distinction toward physics, hedonistic, ethic and logic, but the field of images itself, which sets in doubt the capacity of the image to define the character of art and is in reality occupied with the mode of separating the genuine from the spurious image, and of enriching in this way the concept of the image and of art. What function (it is asked) can a world of pure images possess in the spirit of man, without philosophical, historical, religious or scientific value, and without even moral or hedonistic value? What is more vain than to dream with open eyes in life, which demands, not only open eyes, but an open mind and a nimble spirit? Pure images! But to nourish oneself upon pure images is called by a name of little honour, “to dream,” and there is usually added to

this the epithet of "idle." It is a very insipid and inconclusive thing; can it ever be art? Certainly, we sometimes amuse ourselves with the reading of some sensational romance of adventure, where images follow images in the most various and unexpected way; but we thus enjoy ourselves in moments of fatigue, when we are obliged to kill time, and with a full consciousness that such stuff is not art. Such instances are of the nature of a pastime, a game; but were art a game or a pastime, it would fall into the wide arms of hedonistic doctrine, ever open to receive it. And it is a utilitarian and hedonistic need that impels us sometimes to relax the bow of the mind and the bow of the will, and to stretch ourselves, allowing images to follow one another in our memory, or combining them in quaint forms with the aid of the imagination, in a sort of waking sleep, from which we rouse ourselves as soon as we are rested; and we sometimes rouse ourselves just to devote ourselves to the work of art, which cannot be produced by a mind relaxed. Thus either art is not pure intuition, and the claims put forward in the doctrines which we believed we had above confuted, are not satisfied, and so the confutation itself of these doctrines is troubled with doubts; or intuition cannot consist in a simple act of imagination.

In order to render the problem more exact and more difficult, it will be well to eliminate from it at once that part to which the answer is easy, and which I have not wished to neglect, precisely because it is usually united and confused with it. The intuition is the product of an image, and not of an incoherent mass of images obtained by recalling former images and allowing them to succeed one another capriciously, by combining one image with another in a like capricious manner, joining a horse's neck to a human head, and thus playing a childish game. Old Poetic availed itself

above all of the concept of *unity*, in order to express this distinction between the intuition and imagining, insisting that whatever the artistic work, it should be *simplex et unum*; or of the allied concept of *unity in variety*—that is to say, the multiple images were to find their common centre unit of union in a comprehensive image: and the æsthetic of the nineteenth century created with the same object the distinction, which appears in not a few of its philosophers, between *fancy* (the peculiar artistic faculty) and *imagination* (the extra-artistic faculty). To amass, select, cut up, combine images, presupposes the possession of particular images in the spirit; and fancy produces, whereas imagination is sterile, adapted to extrinsic combinations and not to the generation of organism and life. The most profound problem, contained beneath the rather superficial formula with which I first presented it, is, then: What is the office of the pure image in the life of the spirit? or (which at bottom amounts to the same thing), How does the pure image come into existence? Every inspired work of art gives rise to a long series of imitators, who just repeat, cut up in pieces, combine, and mechanically exaggerate that work, and by so doing play the part of imagination toward or against the fancy. But what is the justification, or what the genesis, of the work of genius, which is afterward submitted (a sign of glory!) to such torments? In order to make this point clear, we must go deeply into the character of fancy or pure intuition.

And the best way to prepare this deeper study is to recall to mind and to criticise the theories with which it has been sought to differentiate artistic intuition from merely incoherent imagination (while taking care not to fall into realism or conceptualism), to establish in what the principle of unity consists, and to justify the productive character of the

fancy. The artistic image (it has been said) is such, when it unites the intelligible with the sensible, and represents an idea. Now "intelligible" and "idea" cannot mean anything but concept (nor has it a different meaning with those who maintain this doctrine); even though it be the concrete concept or idea, proper to lofty philosophical speculation, which differs from the abstract concept or from the representative concept of the sciences. But in any case, the concept or idea always unites the intelligible to the sensible, and not only in art, for the new concept of the concept, first stated by Kant and (so to speak) immanent in all modern thought, heals the breach between the sensible and the intelligible worlds, conceives the concept as judgment, and the judgment as synthesis *a priori*, and the synthesis *a priori* as the word become flesh, as history. Thus that definition of art leads the fancy back to logic and art to philosophy, contrary to intention; and is at most valid for the abstract conception of science, not for the problem of art (the æsthetic and teleological "Critique of Judgment" of Kant had precisely this historical function of correcting what of abstract there yet remained in the "Critique of Pure Reason"). To seek a sensible element for the concept, beyond that which it has already absorbed in itself as concrete concept, and beyond the words in which it expresses itself, would be superfluous. If we persist in this search, it is true that we abandon the conception of art as philosophy or history, but only to pass to the conception of art as *allegory*. And the unsurmountable difficulties of the allegory are well known, as its frigid and anti-historical character is known and universally felt. Allegory is the extrinsic union, the conventional and arbitrary juxtaposition of two spiritual acts, a concept or thought and an image, where it is assumed that this image must represent that concept. And not only is the individual char-

acter of the artistic image not explained by this, but, in addition, a duality is purposely created, because thought remains thought and image image in this juxtaposition, without relation between themselves; so much so, that in contemplating the image, we forget the concept without any disadvantage, —indeed, with advantage,—and in thinking the concept, we dissipate, also with advantage, the superfluous and tiresome image. Allegory enjoyed much favour in the Middle Ages, that mixture of Germanism and Romanism, of barbarism and culture, of bold fancy and of acute reflection; but it was the theoretic element in, and not the effective reality of, the same mediæval art which, where it is art, drives allegory away from or resolves it in itself. This need for the solution of allegorical dualism leads to the refining of the theory of intuition, in so far as it is allegory of the idea, into the other theory, of the intuition as—*symbol*; for the idea does not stand by itself in the symbol, thinkable separately from the symbolising representation, nor does the symbol stand by itself, representable in a lively manner without the idea symbolised. The idea is all reduced to representation (as said the æsthetician Vischer, if to anyone belongs the blame of the very prosaic comparison for so poetic and metaphysical a theme), like a lump of sugar melted in a glass of water, which exists and acts in every molecule of water, but is no longer to be found as a lump of sugar. But the idea that has disappeared, the idea that has become entirely representative, the idea that we can no longer succeed in seizing as idea (save by extracting it, like sugar from sugared water), is no longer idea, and is only the sign that the unity of the artistic image has not yet been achieved. Certainly art is symbol, all symbol—that is, all significant; but symbol of what? What does it mean? The intuition is truly artistic, it is truly intuition, and not a chaotic mass of

images, only when it has a vital principle that animates it, making it all one with itself; but what is this principle?

The answer to such a question may be said to result from the examination of the greatest ideal strife that has ever taken place in the field of art (and is not confined to the epoch that took its name from it and in which it was predominant): the strife between *romanticism* and *classicism*. Giving the general definition, here convenient, and setting aside minor and accidental determinations, romanticism asks of art, above all, the spontaneous and violent effusion of the affections, of love and hate, of anguish and jubilation, of desperation and elevation; and is willingly satisfied and pleased with vaporous and indeterminate images, broken and allusive in style, with vague suggestions, with approximate phrases, with powerful and troubled sketches: while classicism loves the peaceful soul, the wise design, figures studied in their characteristics and precise in outline, ponderation, equilibrium, clarity; and resolutely tends toward *representation*, as the other tends toward *feeling*. And whoever puts himself at one or the other point of view finds crowds of reasons for maintaining it and for confuting the opposite point of view; because (say the romantics), What is the use of an art, rich in beautiful images, which, nevertheless, does not speak to the heart? And if it do speak to the heart, what is the use if the images be not beautiful? And the others will say, What is the use of the shock of the passions, if the spirit do not rest upon a beautiful image? And if the image be beautiful, if our taste be satisfied, what matters the absence of those emotions which can all of them be obtained outside art, and which life does not fail to provide, sometimes in greater quantity than we desire?—But when we begin to feel weary of the fruitless defence of both partial views; above all, when we turn

away from the ordinary works of art produced by the romantic and classical schools, from works convulsed with passion or coldly decorous, and fix them on the works, not of the disciples, but of the masters, not of the mediocre, but of the supreme, we see the contest disappear in the distance and find ourselves unable to call the great portions of these works, romantic or classic or representative, because they are both classic and romantic, feelings and representations, a vigorous feeling which has become all most brilliant representation. Such, for example, are the works of Hellenic art, and such those of Italian poetry and art: the transcendentalism of the Middle Ages became fixed in the bronze of the Dantesque *terzina*; melancholy and suave fancy, in the transparency of the songs and sonnets of Petrarch; sage experience of life and badinage with the fables of the past, in the limpid *ottava rima* of Ariosto; heroism and the thought of death, in the perfect blank-verse hendecasyllabics of Foscolo; the infinite variety of everything, in the sober and austere songs of Giacomo Leopardi. Finally (be it said in parenthesis and without intending comparison with the other examples adduced), the voluptuous refinements and animal sensuality of international decadentism have received their most perfect expression in the prose and verse of an Italian, D'Annunzio. All these souls were profoundly passionate (all, even the serene Lodovico Ariosto, who was so amorous, so tender, and so often represses his emotion with a smile); their works of art are the eternal flower that springs from their passions.

These expressions and these critical judgments can be theoretically resumed in the formula, that what gives coherence and unity to the intuition is feeling: the intuition is really such because it represents a feeling, and can only appear from and upon that. Not the idea, but the feeling, is

what confers upon art the airy lightness of the symbol: an aspiration enclosed in the circle of a representation—that is art; and in it the aspiration alone stands for the representation, and the representation alone for the aspiration. Epic and lyric, or drama and lyric, are scholastic divisions of the indivisible: art is always lyrical—that is, epic and dramatic in feeling. What we admire in genuine works of art is the perfect fanciful form which a state of the soul assumes; and we call this life, unity, solidity of the work of art. What displeases us in the false and imperfect forms is the struggle of several different states of the soul not yet unified, their stratification, or mixture, their vacillating method, which obtains apparent unity from the will of the author, who for this purpose avails himself of an abstract plan or idea, or of extra-æsthetic, passionate emotion. A series of images which seem to be, each in turn, rich in power of conviction, leaves us nevertheless deluded and diffident, because we do not see them generated from a state of the soul, from a “sketch” (as the painters call it), from a motive; and they follow one another and crowd together without that precise intonation, without that accent, which comes from the heart. And what is the figure cut out from the background of the picture or transported and placed against another background, what is the personage of drama or of romance outside his relation with all the other personages and with the general action? And what is the value of this general action if it be not an action of the spirit of the author? The secular disputes concerning dramatic unity are interesting in this connection; they are first applied to the unity of “action” when they have been obtained from an extrinsic determination of time and place, and this finally applied to the unity of “interest,” and the interest would have to be in its turn dissolved in the interest of the spirit of

the poet—that is, in his intimate aspiration, in his feeling. The negative issue of the great dispute between classicists and romanticists is interesting, for it resulted in the negation both of the art which strives to distract and illude the soul as to the deficiency of the image with mere feeling, with the practical violence of feeling, with feeling that has not become contemplation, and of the art which, by means of the superficial clearness of the image, of drawing correctly false, of the word falsely correct, seeks to deceive as to its lack of inspiration and its lack of an æsthetic reason to justify what it has produced. A celebrated sentence uttered by an English critic, and become one of the commonplaces of journalism, states that “all the arts tend to the condition of music”; but it would have been more accurate to say that all the arts are music, if it be thus intended to emphasise the genesis of æsthetic images in feeling, excluding from their number those mechanically constructed or realistically ponderous. And another not less celebrated utterance of a Swiss semi-philosopher, which has had the like good or bad fortune of becoming trivial, discovers that “every landscape is a state of the soul”: which is indisputable, not because the landscape is landscape, but because the landscape is art.

Artistic intuition, then, is always *lyrical* intuition: this latter being a word that is not present as an adjective or definition of the first, but as a synonym, another of the synonyms that can be united to the several that I have mentioned already, and which, all of them, designate the intuition. And if it be sometimes convenient that instead of appearing as a synonym, it should assume the grammatical form of the adjective, that is only to make clear the difference between the intuition-image, or nexus of images (for what is called image is always a nexus of images, since image-atoms do not exist any more than thought-atoms), which

constitutes the organism, and, as organism, has its vital principle, which is the organism itself,—between this, which is true and proper intuition, and that false intuition which is a heap of images put together in play or intentionally or for some other practical purpose, the connection of which, being practical, shows itself to be not organic, but mechanic, when considered from the æsthetic point of view. But the word *lyric* would be redundant save in this explicative or polemical sense; and art is perfectly defined when it is simply defined as *intuition*.

II

PREJUDICES RELATING TO ART

THERE can be no doubt that the process of distinction of art from the facts and the acts with which it has been and is confused, which I have summarily traced, necessitates no small mental effort; but this effort is rewarded with the freedom which it affords of handling the many fallacious distinctions which disfigure the field of æsthetic. These, although they do not present any difficulty in thinking out (indeed, at first they seduce by their very facility and deceitful self-evidence), yet imply the other and greater annoyance of preventing all profound understanding, and indeed of making it impossible to understand anything as to what art truly is. It is true that many people, in order to retain the power of repeating vulgar and traditional distinctions, voluntarily resign themselves to this ignorance. We, on the contrary, now prefer to throw them all away, as a useless hindrance in the new task to which the new theoretic position that we have attained invites and leads us, and to enjoy the greater facility which comes from feeling rich. Wealth is not only to be obtained by acquiring many objects, but, on the contrary, by getting rid of all those that represent economic debt.

Let us begin with the most famous of these economic debts in the circle of æsthetic: the distinction between *content* and *form*, which has caused a division of schools even in the nineteenth century: the schools of the æsthetic of the content (*Gehaltsæsthetik*) and that of the æsthetic of form (*Formæsthetik*). The problems from which these

opposed schools arose were, in general, the following: Does art consist solely of the content, or solely of the form, or of content and form together? What is the character of the content, what that of the *æsthetic* form?—It was answered, on the one hand, that art, the essence of art, is all contained in the content, defined as that which pleases, or as what is moral, or as what raises man to the heaven of religion or of metaphysic, or as what is historically correct, or, finally, as what is naturally and physically beautiful. And, on the other hand, that the content is indifferent, that it is simply a peg or hook from which beautiful forms are suspended, which alone beatify the *æsthetic* spirit: unity, harmony, symmetry, and so on. And on both sides it was attempted to attract the element that had previously been excluded from the essence of art as subordinate and secondary: those for the content admitted that it was an advantage to the content (which, according to them, was really the constitutive element of the beautiful) to adorn itself with beautiful forms also, and to present itself as unity, symmetry, harmony, etc.; and the formalists, in their turn, admitted that if art did not gain by the value of its content, its effect did, not a single value, but the sum of two values being in this case offered. These doctrines, which attained their greatest scholastic bulk in Germany with the Hegelians and the Herbartians, is also to be found more or less everywhere in the history of *æsthetic*, ancient, mediæval, modern, and most modern; and is what amounts to most in common opinion, for nothing is more common than to hear that a drama is beautiful in “form,” but a failure in “content”; that a poem is “most nobly” conceived, but “executed in ugly verse”; that a painter would have been greater did he not waste his power as a designer and as a colourist, upon “small and unworthy themes,” instead of selecting, on the contrary, those

of a historical, patriotic, or sociological character. It may be said that fine taste and true critical sense of art have to defend themselves at every step against the perversions of judgment arising from these doctrines, in which philosophers become the crowd, and the crowd feels itself philosophical, because in agreement with those crowd-philosophers. The origin of these theories is no secret for us, because, even in the brief sketch that we have given, it is quite clear that they have sprung from the trunk of hedonistic, moralistic, conceptualistic, or physical conceptions of art: they are all doctrines which, failing to perceive what makes art art, were obliged somehow to regain art, which they had allowed to escape them, and to reintroduce it in the form of an accessory or accidental element; the upholders of the theory of the content conceived it as an abstract formal element, the formalists as the abstract element of the content. What interests us in those æsthetics is just this dialectic, in which the theorists of the content become formalists against their will, and the formalists upholders of the theory of the content; thus each passes over to occupy the other's place, but to be restless there and to return to their own, which gives rise to the same restlessness. The "beautiful forms" of Herbart do not differ in any way from the "beautiful contents" of the Hegelians, because both are nothing. And we become yet more interested to observe their efforts to get out of prison, and the blows with which they weaken its doors or its walls, and the air-holes which some of those thinkers succeed in opening.—Their efforts are clumsy and sterile, like those of the theorists of the content (they are to be seen in a repulsive form in the *Philosophie des Schönen* of Hartmann), who, by adding stitch to stitch, composed a net of "beautiful contents" (beautiful, sublime, comic, tragic, humouristic, pathetic, idyllic, sentimental, etc., etc.),

in which very coarse net they tried to enclose every form of reality, even that which they had called "ugly." They failed to perceive that their æsthetic content, thus made to enclose little by little the whole of reality, has no longer any character that distinguishes it from other contents, since there is no content beyond reality; and that therefore their fundamental theory was thus fundamentally negated. These contradictory and ingenuous explosions resemble those of other formalistic theorists of the content who maintained the concept of an æsthetic content, but defined it as that "which interests man," and made the interest relating to man to lie in his different historical situations—that is, relative to the individual. This was another way of denying the initial assumption, for it is very clear that the artist would not produce art, did he not interest himself in something which is the datum or the problem of his production, but that this something becomes art only because the artist, by becoming interested in it, makes it so.—These are evasions of formalists, who after having limited art to abstract beautiful forms, void of all content and only to be summed up with contents, timidly introduced among beautiful forms that of the harmony of content with form; or more resolutely declared themselves partisans of a sort of eclecticism, which makes art to consist of a sort of "relation" of the beautiful content with the beautiful form, and, with an incorrectness worthy of eclectics, attributed to terms outside the relation qualities which they assume only within the relation.

For the truth is really this: content and form must be clearly distinguished in art, but must not be separately qualified as artistic, precisely because their relation only is artistic—that is, their unity, understood not as an abstract, dead unity, but as concrete and living, which is that of the synthesis *a priori*; and art is a true *æsthetic synthesis a priori* of feeling

and image in the intuition, as to which it may be repeated that feeling without image is blind, and image without feeling is void. Feeling and image do not exist for the artistic spirit outside the synthesis; they will have existence from another point of view in another plane of knowledge, and feeling will be the practical aspect of the spirit that loves and hates, desires and dislikes, and the image will be the inanimate residue of art, the withered leaf, prey of the wind of imagination and of amusement's caprice. All this has no concern with the artist or the æsthetician: just as art is no vain fancying, so is it not tumultuous passionality, but the uplifting of that act by means of another act, or, if it be preferred, the substitution of that tumult for another tumult, that of the longing to create and to contemplate for the joys and the sorrows of artistic creation. It is therefore indifferent, or a question of terminological opportunity, whether we should present art as content or as form, provided it be always recognised that the content is formed and the form filled, that feeling is figurative feeling and the figure a figure that is felt. And it is only owing to historical deference toward him who better than others caused the concept of the autonomy of art to be appreciated, and wished to affirm this autonomy with the word "form," thus opposing alike the abstract theory of the content of the philosophisers and moralists and the abstract formalism of the academicians,—in deference, I say, to De Sanctis, and also because of the ever active polemic against the attempts to absorb art in other modes of spiritual activity,—that the æsthetic of the intuition can be called "Æsthetic of form." It is useless to refute an objection that certainly might be made (but rather with the sophistry of the advocate than with the acuteness of the scientist), namely, that the æsthetic of the intuition also, since it describes the content of art as feeling

or state of the soul, qualifies it outside the intuition, and seems to admit that a content, which is not feeling or a state of the soul, does not lend itself to artistic elaboration, and is not an æsthetic content. Feeling, or the state of the soul, is not a particular content, but the whole universe seen *sub specie intuitionis*; and outside it there is no other content conceivable that is not also a different form of the intuitive form; not thoughts, which are the whole universe *sub specie cogitationis*; not physical things and mathematical beings, which are the whole universe *sub specie schematismi et abstractionis*; not wills, which are the whole universe *sub specie volitionis*.

Another not less fallacious distinction (to which the words "content" and "form" are also applied) separates *intuition* from *expression*, the image from the physical translation of the image. It places on one side phantasms of feeling, images of men, of animals, of landscapes, of actions, of adventures, and so on; and on the other, sounds, tones, lines, colours, and so on; calling the first the external, the second the internal element of art: the *art* properly so-called, the other *technique*. It is easy to distinguish internal and external, at least in words, especially when no minute enquiry is made as to the reasons and motives for the distinction, and when the distinction is just thrown down there without any service being demanded of it; so easy that by never thinking about it the distinction may eventually come to seem to thought indubitable. But it becomes a different question when, as must be done with every distinction, we pass from the act of distinguishing to that of establishing relation and unifying, because this time we run against desperate obstacles. What has here been distinguished cannot be unified, because it has been badly distinguished: how can something external and extraneous to the internal become united to the internal

and express it? How can a sound or a colour express an image without sound and without colour? How can the bodiless express a body? How can the spontaneity of fancy and of reflection and even technical action coincide in the same act? When the intuition has been distinguished from the expression, and the one has been made different from the other, no ingenuity of terms can reunite them; all the processes of association, of habit, of mechanising, of forgetting, of instinctification, proposed by the psychologists and laboriously developed by them, allow the scissure to reappear at the end: on one side the expression, on the other the image. And there does not seem to be any way of escape, save that of taking refuge in the hypothesis of a mystery which, according to poetical or mathematical tastes, will assume the appearance of a mysterious marriage or of a mysterious psychophysical parallelism. The first is a parallelism incorrectly overcome; the second, a marriage deferred to distant ages or to the obscurity of the unknowable.

But before having recourse to mystery (a refuge to which there is always time to fly), we must enquire whether the two elements have been correctly distinguished, and if an intuition without expression be conceivable. It may happen that the thing is as little existing and as inconceivable as a soul without a body, which has truly been as much talked of in philosophies as in religions, but to have talked about it is not the same thing as to have experienced and conceived it. In reality, we know nothing but expressed intuitions: a thought is not thought for us, unless it be possible to formulate it in words; a musical fancy, only when it becomes concrete in sounds; a pictorial image, only when it is coloured. We do not say that the words must necessarily be declaimed in a loud voice, the music performed, or the picture painted upon wood or canvas; but it is certain that

when a thought is really thought, when it has attained to the maturity of thought, the words run through our whole organism, soliciting the muscles of our mouth and ringing internally in our ears; when music is truly music, it trills in the throat and shivers in the fingers that touch ideal notes; when a pictorial image is pictorially real, we are impregnated with lymphs that are colours, and maybe, where the colouring matters were not at our disposition, we might spontaneously colour surrounding objects by a sort of irradiation, as is said of certain hysterics and of certain saints, who caused the stigmata upon their hands and feet by means of an act of imagination! Thought, musical fancy, pictorial image, did not indeed exist without expression, they did not exist at all previous to the formation of this expressive state of the spirit. To believe in their pre-existence is ingenuousness, if it be ingenuous to have faith in those impotent poets, painters, or musicians who always have their heads full of poetic, pictorial, and musical creations, and only fail to translate them into external form, either because, as they say, they are impatient of expression, or because technique is not sufficiently advanced to afford sufficient means for their expression: many centuries ago it offered sufficient means to Homer, Pheidias, and Apelles, but it does not suffice for them, who, if we are to believe them, carry in their mighty heads an art greater than those others! Sometimes, too, ingenuousness arises from the illusion due to keeping a bad account with ourselves that, having imagined, and consequently expressed, some few images, we already possess in ourselves all the other images that must form part of a work, which we do not yet possess, as well as the vital nexus that should connect them, which is not yet formed and therefore is not expressed.

Art, understood as intuition, according to the concept that

I have exposed, having denied the existence of a physical world outside of it, which it looks upon as simply a construction of our intellect, does not know what to do with the parallelism of the thinking substance and of substance extended in space, and has no need to promote impossible marriages, because its thinking substance—or, better, its intuitive act—is perfect in itself, and is that same fact which the intellect afterwards constructs as extended. And inasmuch as an image without expression is inconceivable, by just so much is an image which shall be also expression conceivable, and indeed logically necessary; that is, which shall be really an image. If we take from a poem its metre, its rhythm, and its words, poetical thought does not, as some opine, remain behind: there remains nothing. The poetry is born, like those words, that rhythm, and that metre. Nor could expression be compared with the epidermis of organisms, unless it be said (and perhaps this may not be false even in physiology) that all the organism in every cell's cell is also epidermis.

I should, however, be wanting to my methodological convictions and to my intention of doing justice to errors (and I have already done justice to the distinction of form and content by demonstrating the truth at which they aimed and failed to grasp), were I not to indicate what truth may also be active at the base of the false distinction of the indistinguishable, intuition and expression. Fancy and technique are rationally distinguished, though not as elements of art; and they are related and united between themselves, though not in the field of art, but in the wider field of the spirit in its totality. Technical or practical problems to be solved, difficulties to be vanquished, are truly present to the artist, and there is truly something which, without being really physical, and being, like everything real, a spiritual act, can be meta-

phoricised as physical in respect to the intuition. What is this something? The artist, whom we have left vibrating with expressed images which break forth by infinite channels from his whole being, is a whole man, and therefore also a practical man, and as such takes measures against losing the result of his spiritual labour, and in favour of rendering possible or easy, for himself and for others, the *reproduction* of his images; hence he engages in practical acts which assist that work of reproduction. These practical acts are guided, as are all practical acts, by knowledge, and for this reason are called technical; and, since they are practical, they are distinguished from contemplation, which is theoretical, and seem to be external to it, and are therefore called physical: and they assume this name the more easily in so far as they are fixed and made abstract by the intellect. Thus writing and phonography are united with words and music, canvas and wood and walls covered with colours, stone cut and incised, iron and bronze and other metals melted and moulded to certain shapes by sculpture and architecture. So distinct among themselves are the two forms of activity that it is possible to be a great artist with a bad technique, a poet who corrects the proofs of his verses badly, an architect who makes use of unsuitable material or does not attend to statics, a painter who uses colours that deteriorate rapidly: examples of these weaknesses are so frequent that it is not worth while to cite any of them. But what is impossible is to be a great poet who writes verses badly, a great painter who does not give tone to his colours, a great architect who does not harmonise his lines, a great composer who does not harmonise his notes; and, in short, a great artist who cannot express himself. It has been said of Raphael that he would have been a great painter even if he had not possessed hands; but certainly not that he would have been

a great painter if the sense of design and colour had been wanting to him.

And (be it noted in passing, for I must condense as I proceed) this apparent transformation of the intuitions into physical things—altogether analogous with the apparent transformation of wants and economic labour into things and into merchandise—also explains how people have come to talk not only of “artistic things” and of “beautiful things,” but also of “a beautiful of nature.” It is evident that, besides the instruments that are made for the reproduction of images, objects already existing can be met with, whether produced by man or not, which perform such a service—that is to say, are more or less adapted to fixing the memory of our intuitions; and these things take the name of “natural beauties,” and exercise their fascination only when we know how to understand them with the same soul with which the artist or artists have taken and appropriated them, giving value to them and indicating the “point of view” from which we must look at them, thus connecting them with their own intuitions. But the always imperfect adaptability, the fugitive nature, the mutability of “natural beauties” also justify the inferior place accorded to them, compared with beauties produced by art. Let us leave it to rhetoricians or madmen to affirm that a beautiful tree, a beautiful river, a sublime mountain, or even a beautiful horse or a beautiful human figure, are superior to the chisel-stroke of Michelangelo or the verse of Dante; but let us say, with greater propriety, that “Nature” is stupid compared with Art, and that she is “mute,” if man does not make her speak.

A third distinction, which also labours to distinguish the indistinguishable, is attached to the concept of the æsthetic expression, and divides it into two moments of expression abstractly considered, *propriety* and beauty of expres-

sion, or *adorned* expression, founding upon these the classification of two orders of expression, naked and ornate. This is a doctrine of which traces may be found in all the various domains of art, but which has not been developed in any one of them to the same extent as in that of words, where it bears a celebrated name and is called "Rhetoric," and has had a very long history, from the Greek rhetoricians to our own day. It persists in the schools, in treatises, and even in æsthetics of scientific pretensions, not to mention in common belief (as is natural), though in our day it has lost much of its primitive vigour. Men of lofty intellect have accepted it, or let it live, for centuries, owing to the force of inertia or of tradition; the few rebels have hardly ever attempted to reduce their rebellion to a system and to cut out the error at its roots. The injury done by Rhetoric, with its idea of "ornate" as differing from, and of greater value than, "naked" speech, has not been limited solely to the circle of æsthetic, but has appeared also in criticism, and even in literary education, because, just as it was incapable of explaining perfect beauty, so it was adapted to provide an apparent justification for vitiated beauty, and to encourage writing in an inflated, affected, and improper form. However, the division which it introduces and on which it relies is a logical contradiction, because, as is easy to prove, it destroys the concept itself, which it undertakes to divide into moments, and the objects, which it undertakes to divide into classes. An appropriate expression, if appropriate, is also beautiful, beauty being nothing but the determination of the image, and therefore of the expression; and if it be wished to indicate by calling it naked that there is something wanting which should be present, then the expression is inappropriate and deficient, either it is not or is not yet expression. On the other hand, an ornate expression, if it

be expressive in every part, cannot be called ornate, but as naked as the other, and as appropriate as the other; if it contain inexpressive, additional, extrinsic elements, it is not beautiful, but ugly, it is not or is not yet expression; to be so, it must purify itself of external elements (as the other must be enriched with the elements that are wanting).

Expression and beauty are not two concepts, but a single concept, which it is permissible to designate with either synonymous vocable: artistic fancy is always corporeal, but it is not obese, being always clad with itself and never charged with anything else, or "ornate." Certainly a problem was lurking beneath this falsest of distinctions, the necessity of making a distinction; and the problem (as can be deduced from certain passages in Aristotle, and from the psychology and gnoseology of the Stoics, and as we see it, intensified in the discussions of the Italian rhetoricians of the seventeenth century) was concerned with the relations between thought and fancy, philosophy and poetry, logic and æsthetic (dialectic and rhetoric, or, as was still said at the time, the "open" and the closed "fist"). "Naked" expression referred to thought and to philosophy, "ornate" expression to fancy and to poetry. But it is not less true that this problem as to the distinction between the two forms of the theoretical spirit could not be solved in the field of one of them, intuition or expression, where nothing will ever be found but fancy, poetry, æsthetic; and the undue introduction of logic will only project there a deceitful shadow, which will darken and hamper intelligence, depriving it of the view of art in its fulness and purity, without giving it that of logicity and of thought.

But the greatest injury caused by the rhetorical doctrine of "ornate" expression to the theoretical systematisation of the forms of the human spirit, concerns the treatment of lan-

guage, because, granted that we admit naked and simply grammatical expressions, and expressions that are ornate or rhetorical, language becomes an aggregate of naked expressions and is handed over to grammar, and, as an ulterior consequence (since grammar finds no place in rhetoric and æsthetic), to logic, where the subordinate office of a semeiotic or *ars significandi* is assigned to it. Indeed, the logistic conception of language is closely united and proceeds *pari passu* with the rhetorical doctrine of expression; they appeared together in Hellenic antiquity, and they still exist, though disputed, in our time. Rebellions against the logicism of the doctrine of language have rarely appeared, and have had as little efficacy as those against rhetoric; and only in the romantic period (traversed by Vico a century before) has a lively consciousness been formed by certain thinkers as to the *fantastic* or *metaphoric* nature of language, and its closer connection with poetry than with logic. Yet since a more or less inartistic idea of art persisted even among the best (conceptualism, moralism, hedonism, etc.), there remained a very powerful impediment to the *identification of language and art*. This identification appears to be as unavoidable as it is easy, having established the concept of art as intuition and of intuition as expression, and therefore implicitly its identity with language: always assuming that language be conceived in its full extension, without arbitrary restrictions to so-called articulate language and without arbitrary exclusion of tonic, mimetic, and graphic; and in all its intension—that is, taken in its reality, which is the act of speaking itself, without falsifying it with the abstractions of grammars and vocabularies, and with the foolish belief that man speaks with the vocabulary and with grammar. Man speaks at every instant like the poet, because, like the poet, he expresses his impressions and his

feelings in the form called conversational or familiar, which is not separated by any abyss from the other forms called prosaic, poetic-prosaic, narrative, epic, dialogue, dramatic, lyric, melic, song, and so on. And if it do not displease man in general to be considered poet and always poet (as he is by force of his humanity), it should not displease the poet to be united with common humanity, because this union alone explains the power which poetry, understood in the loftiest and in the narrowest sense, wields over all human souls. Were poetry a language apart, a "language of the gods," men would not understand it; and if it elevate them, it elevates them not above, but within themselves: true democracy and true aristocracy coincide in this field also. Coincidence of art and language, which implies, as is natural, coincidence of æsthetic and of philosophy of language, definable the one by the other and therefore identical,—this I ventured to place twelve years ago in the title of a treatise of mine on *Æsthetic*, which has truly not failed of its effect upon many linguists and philosophers of *Æsthetic* in Italy and outside Italy, as is shewn by the copious "literature" which it has produced. This identification will benefit studies on art and poetry by purifying them of hedonistic, moralistic, and conceptualistic residues, still to be found in such quantity in literary and artistic criticism. But the benefit which it will confer upon linguistic studies will be far more inestimable, for it is urgent that they should be disencumbered of physiological, psychological, and psychophysiological methods, now the fashion, and be freed from the ever returning theory of the *conventional* origin of language, which has the inevitable correlative of the *mystical* theory as its inevitable reaction. It will no longer be necessary to construct absurd parallelisms even for language, or to promote mysterious nuptials between sign and image: when language is no longer con-

ceived as a sign, but as an image which is significant—that is, a sign in itself, and therefore coloured, sounding, singing, articulate. The significant image is the spontaneous work of the human spirit, whereas the sign, wherewith man agrees with man, presupposes language; or if it be wished, nevertheless, to explain language by signs, it recommends us to call upon God, as upon the giver of the first signs—that is, to presuppose language in another way, by consigning it to the Unknowable.

I shall conclude my account of the prejudices relating to art with that one of them which is most usual, because it is mingled with the daily life of criticism, namely, history of art: prejudice of the possibility of distinguishing several or many *particular forms of art*, each one determinable in its own particular concept and within its limits, and furnished with its proper laws. This erroneous doctrine is embodied in two systematic series, one of which is known as the *theory of literary and artistic kinds* (lyric, drama, romance, epic and romantic poem, idyll, comedy, tragedy; sacred, civil-life, familiar, from life, still-life, landscape, flower and fruit painting; heroic, funereal, costume, sculpture; church, operatic, chamber music; civil, military, ecclesiastic architecture, etc., etc.), and the other as *theory of the arts* (poetry, painting, sculpture, architecture, music, art of the actor, gardening, etc., etc.). One of these sometimes figures as a subdivision of another. This prejudice, of which it is easy to trace the origin, has its first notable monuments in Hellenic culture, and persists in our days. Many æstheticians still write treatises on the æsthetic of the tragic, the comic, the lyric, the humorous, and æsthetics of painting, of music, or of poetry (these last are still called by the old name of “poetics”); and, what is worse (though but little attention is paid to these æstheticians who are im-

pelled to write through solitary dilettantism or academic profession), critics, in judging works of art, have not altogether abandoned the habit of judging them according to the genus or particular form of art to which, according to the above æstheticians, they should belong; and, instead of clearly stating whether a work be beautiful or ugly, they proceed to reason their impressions, saying that it well observes, or wrongly violates, the laws of the drama, or of romance, or of painting, or of bas-relief. It is also very common in all countries to treat artistic and literary history as *history of kinds*, and to present the artists as cultivating this or that kind; and to divide the work of an artist, which always has unity of development, whatever form it take, whether lyric, romance or drama, into as many compartments as there are kinds; so that Lodovico Ariosto, for example, appears now among the cultivators of the Latin poetry of the Renaissance, now among the authors of the first Latin satires, now among those of the first comedies, now among those who brought the poem of chivalry to perfection: as though Latin poetry, satire, comedy, and poem were not always the same poet, Ariosto, in his experiments, in his logic, and in the manifestations of his spiritual development.

It is not to be denied that the theory of kinds and of the arts has not had, and does not now possess, its own internal dialectic and its autocriticism, or irony, according as we may please to call it; and no one is ignorant that literary history is full of these cases of an established style, against which an artist of genius offends in his work and calls forth the reprobation of the critics: a reprobation which does not, however, succeed in suffocating the admiration for, and the popularity of, his work, so that finally, when it is not possible to blame the artist and it is not wished to blame the critic of kinds, the

matter ends with a compromise, and the kind is enlarged or accepts beside it a new kind, like a legitimated bastard, and the compromise lasts, by force of inertia, until a new work of genius comes to upset again the fixed rule. An irony of the doctrine is also the impossibility, in which the theoreticians find themselves, of logically fixing the boundaries between the kinds and the arts: all the definitions that they have produced, when examined rather more closely, either evaporate in the general definition of art, or shew themselves to be an arbitrary raising to the rank of kinds and rules particular works of art irreducible to rigorous logical terms. Absurdities resulting from the effort to determine rigorously what is indeterminable, owing to the contradictory nature of the attempt, are to be found even among the great ones, even in Lessing, who arrives at this extravagant conclusion, that painting represents "bodies": bodies, not actions and souls, not the action and the soul of the painter! They are also to be found among the questions that logically arise from that illogic: thus, a definite field having been assigned to every kind and to every art, what kind and what art is *superior*? Is painting superior to sculpture, drama to lyric? And again, the forces of art having been thus divided, would it not be advisable to reunite them in a type of work of art which shall drive away other forces, as a coalition of armies drives away a single army: will not the work, for instance, in which poetry, music, scenic art, decoration, are united, develop a greater æsthetic force than a *Lied* of Goethe or a drawing of Leonardo? These are questions, distinctions, judgments, and definitions which arouse the revolt of the poetic and artistic sense, which loves each work for itself, for what it is, as a living creature, individual and incomparable, and knows that each work has its individual law. Hence has arisen the disagreement between the

affirmative judgment of artistic souls and the negative one of professional critics, between the negation of the former and the affirmation of the latter; and the professional critics pass for pedants, not without good reason, although artistic souls are in their turn "disarmed prophets"—that is, incapable of reasoning and of deducing the correct theory immanent in their judgments, and of opposing it to the pedantic theory of their adversaries.

That correct theory is precisely an aspect of the conception of art as intuition, or lyrical intuition; and, since every work of art expresses a state of the soul, and the state of the soul is individual and always new, the intuition implies infinite intuitions, which it is impossible to place in pigeonholes as *kinds*, unless these be infinite pigeonholes, and therefore not pigeonholes of kinds, but of intuitions. And since, on the other hand, individuality of intuition implies individuality of expression, and a picture is distinct from another picture, not less than from a poem, and picture and poem are not of value because of the sounds that beat the air and the colours refracted by the light, but because of what they can tell to the spirit, in so far as they enter into it, it is useless to have recourse to abstract means of expression, to construct the other series of kinds and classes: which amounts to saying that any theory of the division of the arts is without foundation. The kind or class is in this case one only, art itself or the intuition, whereas single works of art are infinite: all are original, each one incapable of being translated into the other (since to translate, to translate with artistic skill, is to create a new work of art), each one uncontrolled by the intellect. No intermediate element interposes itself philosophically between the universal and the particular, no series of kinds or species, of *generalia*. Neither the artist who produces art, nor the spectator who contemplates

it, has need of anything but the universal and the individual, or, better, the universal individuated: the universal artistic activity, which is all contracted or concentrated in the representation of a single state of the soul.

Nevertheless, if the pure artist and the pure critic, and also the pure philosopher, are not occupied with *generalia*, with classes or kinds, these retain their utility on other grounds; and this utility is the true side of those erroneous theories, which I will not leave without mention. It is certainly useful to construct a net of *generalia*, not for the production of art, which is spontaneous, nor for the judgment of it, which is philosophical, but to collect and to some extent circumscribe the infinite single intuitions, for the use of the attention and of memory, in order to group together to some extent the innumerable particular works of art. These classes will always be formed, as is natural, either by means of the abstract imagination or the abstract expression, and therefore as classes of states of the soul (literary and artistic kinds) and classes of means of expression (art). Nor does it avail to object here that the various kinds and arts are arbitrarily distinguished, and that the general dichotomy is itself arbitrary; since it is admitted without difficulty that the procedure is certainly arbitrary, but the arbitrariness becomes innocuous and useful from the very fact that every pretension of being a philosophical principle and criterion for the judgment of art is removed from it. Those kinds and classes render easy the knowledge of art and education in art, offering to the first, as it were, an index of the most important works of art, to the second a collection of most important information suggested by the practice of art. Everything depends upon not confounding hints with reality, and hypothetic warnings or imperatives with categoric imperatives: a confusion which multiple and continuous

temptations are certainly apt to induce, whence it is easy to be dominated by them, but not at all inevitable. Books of literary origin, rhetoric, grammar (with their divisions into parts of speech and their grammatical and syntactical laws), of the art of musical composition, of metre, of painting, and so on, contain the principal hints and collections of precepts. Tendencies toward a definite expression of art are manifested in them either only in a secondary manner,—and in this case it is art that is still abstract, art in elaboration (the poetic arts of classicism or romanticism, purist or popular grammars, etc.),—or as tendencies toward the philosophical comprehension of their argument, and then they give rise to the divisions into kinds and into arts, an error which I have criticised: an error which, by its contradictions, opens the way to the true doctrine of the individuality of art.

Certainly this doctrine produces at first sight a sort of bewilderment: individual, original, untranslatable, unclassifiable intuitions seem to escape the rule of thought, which would seem unable to dominate them without placing them in relation with one another; and this appears to be precisely forbidden by the doctrine that has been developed, which has rather the air of being anarchic or anarchoid than liberal and liberistic.

A little piece of poetry is æsthetically equal to a poem; a tiny little picture or a sketch, to an altar picture or an *affresco*; a letter is a work of art, no less than a romance; even a fine translation is as original as an original work! These propositions will be indubitable, because logically deduced from verified premises; they will be true, although (and this is without doubt a merit) paradoxical, or at variance with vulgar opinions: but will they not be in want of some complement? There must be some mode of arranging, subordinating, connecting, understanding, and domi-

nating the dance of the intuitions, if we do not wish to bewilder our wits with them.

And there is indeed such a mode, for when we denied theoretic value to abstract classifications we did not intend to deny it to that genetic and concrete classification which is not, indeed, a "classification" and is called *History*. In history each work of art takes the place that belongs to it—that and no other: the ballade of Guido Cavalcanti and the sonnet of Cecco Angiolieri, which seem to be the sigh or the laughter of an instant; the "*Commedia*" of Dante, which seems to resume in itself a millennium of the human spirit; the "*Maccheronee*" of Merlin Cocaio at the close of the Middle Ages, with their noisy laughter; the elegant Cinquecento translation of the *Æneid* by Annibal Caro; the dry prose of Sarpi; and the Jesuitic-polemical prose of Daniello Bartoli: without the necessity of judging that to be not original which is original, because it lives; that to be small which is neither great nor small, because it escapes measure: or we can say great and small, if we will, but metaphorically, with the intention of manifesting certain admirations and of noting certain relations of importance (quite other than arithmetic or geometrical). And in history, which is ever becoming richer and more definite, not in pyramids of empirical concepts, which become more and more empty the higher they rise and the more subtle they become, is to be found the link of all works of art and of all intuitions, because in history they appear organically connected among themselves, as successive and necessary stages of the development of the spirit, each one a note of the eternal poem which harmonises all single poems in itself.

III

THE PLACE OF ART IN THE SPIRIT AND IN HUMAN SOCIETY

THE dispute as to the dependence or independence of art was at its hottest in the romantic period, when the motto of "art for art's sake" was coined, and as its apparent antithesis that other of "art for life"; and from that time it was discussed, to tell the truth, rather among men of letters or artists than philosophers. It has lost interest in our day, fallen to the rank of a theme with which beginners amuse or exercise themselves, or of an argument for academic orations. However, even previous to the romantic period, and indeed in the most ancient documents containing reflections upon art, are to be found traces of it; and philosophers of Æsthetic themselves, even when they appear to neglect it (and they do indeed neglect it in its vulgar form), really do consider it, and indeed may be said to think of nothing else. Because, to dispute as to the dependence or the independence, the autonomy or the heteronomy of art does not mean anything but to enquire whether *art is or is not*, and, if it is, *what it is*. An activity whose principle depends upon that of another activity is, effectively, that other activity, and retains for itself an existence that is only putative or conventional: art which depends upon morality, upon pleasure, or upon philosophy is morality, pleasure, or philosophy; it is not art. If it be held not to be dependent, it will be advisable to investigate the foundation of its independence—that is to say, how art is distinguished from morality, from pleasure, from philosophy, and from all

other things; what it is—and to posit whatever it may be as truly autonomous and independent. It may chance to be asserted, on the other hand, by those very people who affirm the concept of the original nature of art, that although it preserve its peculiar nature, yet its place is below another activity of superior dignity, and (as used at one time to be said) that it is a handmaid to ethic, a minister to politics, and a dragoman to science; but this would only prove that there are people who have the habit of contradicting themselves or of allowing discord among their thoughts: dazed folk whose existence truly does not call for any sort of proof. For our part, we shall take care not to fall into so dazed a condition; and having already made clear that art is distinguished from the physical world and from the practical, moral, and conceptual activity as *intuition*, we shall give ourselves no further anxiety, and shall assume that with that first demonstration we have also demonstrated the *independence* of art.

But another problem is implicit in the dispute as to dependence or independence; of this I have hitherto purposely not spoken, and I shall now proceed to examine it. Independence is a concept of relation, and in this aspect the only absolute independence is the Absolute, or absolute relation; every particular form and concept is independent on one side and dependent on another, or both independent and dependent. Were this not so, the spirit, and reality in general, would be either a series of juxtaposed absolutes, or (which amounts to the same thing) a series of juxtaposed nullities. The independence of a form implies the matter to which it is applied, as we have already seen in the development of the genesis of art as an intuitive formation of a sentimental or passionate material; and in the case of absolute independence, since all material and aliment would be want-

ing to it, form itself, being void, would become nullified. But since the recognised independence prevents our thinking one activity as submitted to the principle of another, the dependence must be such as to guarantee the independence. But this would not be guaranteed in the hypothesis that one activity should be made to depend upon another, in the same way as that other upon it, like two forces which counterbalance each other, and of which the one does not conquer the other; because, if it do not conquer it, we have reciprocal arrest and static; if it conquer the other, pure and simple dependence, which has already been excluded. Hence, considering the matter in general, it appears that there is no other way of thinking the simultaneous independence and dependence of the various spiritual activities than that of conceiving them in the relation of condition and conditioned, in which the conditioned surpasses the condition and presupposes it, and, becoming again in its turn condition, gives rise to a new conditioned, thus constituting a series of *developments*. No other defect could be attributed to this series than that the first of the series would be a condition without a previous conditioned, and the last conditioned which would not become in its turn condition, thus causing a double rupture of the law of development itself. Even this defect is healed if the last be made the condition of the first and the first the condition of the last; that is to say, if the series be conceived as reciprocal action, or, better (and abandoning all naturalistic phraseology), as a *circle*. This conception seems to be the only way out of the difficulties with which the other conceptions of the spiritual life are striving, both that which makes it consist of an assemblage of independent and unrelated faculties of the soul, or of independent and unrelated ideas of value, and that which subordinates all these in one and resolves them in that one,

which remains immobile and impotent; or, more subtly, conceives them as necessary grades of a linear development which leads from an irrational first to a last that would wish to be most rational, but is, however, superrational, and as such also irrational.

But it will be opportune not to insist upon this somewhat abstract scheme, and rather consider the manner in which it becomes actual in the life of the spirit, beginning with the æsthetic spirit. For this purpose we shall again return to the artist, or man-artist, who has achieved the process of liberation from the sentimental tumult and has objectified it in a lyrical image—that is, has attained to art. He finds his satisfaction in this image, because he has worked and moved in this direction: all know more or less the joy of the complete expression which we succeed in giving to our own psychical impulses, and the joy in those of others, which are also ours, when we contemplate the works of others, which are to some extent ours, and which we make ours. But is the satisfaction definite? Was only the man-artist impelled toward the image? Toward the *image* and toward *another* at the same time; toward the image in so far as he is man-artist, toward another in so far as he is artist-man; toward the image on the first plane, but, since the first plane is connected with the second and third planes, also toward the second and third, although immediately toward the first and mediately toward the second and third? And now that he has reached the first plane, the second appears immediately behind it, and becomes a direct aim from indirect that it was before; and a new demand declares itself, a new process begins. Not, be it well observed, that the intuitive power gives place to another power, as though taking its turn of pleasure or of service; but the intuitive power itself—or, better, the spirit itself, which at first seemed to be, and in a

certain sense was, all intuition—develops in itself the new process, which comes forth from the vitals of the first. "One soul is not kindled at another" in us (I shall avail myself again on this occasion of Dante's words), but the one soul, which first is all collected in one single "virtue," and which "seems to obey no longer any power," satisfied in that virtue alone (in the artistic image), finds in that virtue, together with its satisfaction, its dissatisfaction: its satisfaction, because it gives to the soul all that it can give and is expected from it; its dissatisfaction, because, having obtained all that, and having satiated the soul with its ultimate sweetness,— "what is asked and thanked for,"—satisfaction is sought for the new need caused by the first satisfaction, which was not able to arise without that first satisfaction. And we all know also, from continual experience, the new want which lurks behind the formation of images. Ugo Foscolo has a love-affair with the Countess Arese; he knows with what sort of love and with what sort of woman he has to do, as can be proved from the letters he wrote, which are to be read in print. Nevertheless, during the moments that he loves her, that woman is his universe, and he aspires to possess her as the highest beatitude, and in the enthusiasm of his admiration would render the mortal woman immortal, would transfigure this earthly creature into one divine for the time to come, achieving for her a new miracle of love. And indeed he already finds her rapt to the empyrean, an object of worship and of prayers:

*And thou, divine one, living in my hymns,
Shalt receive the vows of my Insubrian descendants.*

The ode *All' amica risanata* would not have taken shape in the spirit of Foscolo unless this metamorphosis of love had been desired and longed for with the greatest seriousness

(lovers and even philosophers, if they have been in love, can witness that these absurdities are seriously desired); and the images with which Foscolo represents the fascination of his goddess-friend, so rich in perils, would not have presented themselves so vividly and so spontaneously as they did. But what was that impetus of the soul which has now become a magnificent lyrical representation? Was all of Foscolo, the soldier, the patriot, the man of learning, moved with so many spiritual needs, expressed in that aspiration? Did it act so energetically within him as to be turned into action, and to some extent to give direction to his practical life? Foscolo, who had not been wanting of insight in the course of his love, as regards his poetry also from time to time became himself again when the creative tumult was appeased, and again acquired full clearness of vision. He asks himself what he really did will, and what the woman deserved. It may be that a slight suspicion of scepticism had insinuated itself during the formation of the image, if our ears be not deceived in seeming to detect here and there in the ode some trace of elegant irony toward the woman, and of the poet toward himself. This would not have happened in the case of a more ingenuous spirit, and the poetry would have flowed forth quite ingenuously. Foscolo the poet, having achieved his task and therefore being no longer poet, now wishes to know his real condition. He no longer forms the image, because he has formed it; he no longer fancies, but perceives and narrates ("that woman," he will say later of the "divine one," "had a piece of brain instead of a heart"); and the lyrical image changes, for him and for us, into an autobiographical extract, or *perception*.

With perception we have entered a new and very wide spiritual field; and, truly, words are not strong enough to satirise those thinkers who, now as in the past, confound

image and perception, making of the image a perception (a portrait or copy or imitation of nature, or history of the individual and of the times, etc.), and, worse still, of the perception a kind of image apprehensible by the "senses." But perception is neither more nor less than a complete *judgment*, and as judgment implies an image and a category or system of mental categories which must dominate the image (reality, quality, etc.); and in respect of the image, or a *a priori æsthetic synthesis* of feeling and fancy (intuition), it is a new synthesis, of representation and category, of subject and predicate, the *a priori logical synthesis*, of which it would be fitting to repeat all that has been said of the other, and, above all, that in its content and form, representation and category, subject and predicate, do not appear as two elements united by a third, but the representation appears as category, the category as representation, in indivisible unity: the subject is subject only in the predicate, and the predicate is predicate only in the subject. Nor is perception a logical act among other logical acts, or the most rudimentary and imperfect of them; for he who is able to extract from it all the treasures it contains would have no need to seek beyond it for other determinations of logicity, because consciousness of what has really happened, which in its eminently literary forms takes the name of *history*, and consciousness of the universal, which in its eminent forms takes the name of system or *philosophy*, spring from perception, which is itself this synthetic gemination: and philosophy and history constitute the superior unity, which philosophers have discovered, for no other reason than the synthetic connection of the perceptive judgment, whence they are born and in which they live, identifying philosophy and history, and which men of good sense discover in their own way, though they always observe that ideas suspended

in air are phantoms, are facts which occur—real facts—what alone is true, and alone worthy of being known. Finally, perception (the variety of perceptions) explains why the human intellect strives to emerge from them and to impose upon them a world of types and of laws, governed by mathematical measures and relations; which is the reason of the formation of the *natural sciences and mathematics*, in addition to philosophy and history.

It is not here my task to give a sketch of Logic, as I have been or am giving a sketch of Æsthetic; and therefore, refraining from determining and developing the theory of Logic, and intellectual, perceptive, and historical knowledge, I shall resume the thread of the argument, not proceeding on this occasion from the artistic and intuitive spirit, but from the logical and historical, which has surpassed the intuitive and has elaborated the image in perception. Does the spirit find satisfaction in this form? Certainly: all know the very lively satisfactions of knowledge and science; all know, from experience, the desire which takes possession of one to discover the countenance of reality, concealed by our illusions; and even though that countenance be terrible, the discovery is never unaccompanied with profound pleasure, due to the satisfaction of possessing the truth. But does such satisfaction differ in being complete and final from that afforded by art? Does not dissatisfaction perhaps appear side by side with the satisfaction of knowing reality? This, too, is most certain; and the dissatisfaction of having known manifests itself (as indeed all know by experience) in the desire for action: it is well to know the real state of affairs, but we must know it in order to act; by all means let us know the world, but in order that we may change it: *tempus cognoscendi, tempus destruendi, tempus renovandi*. No man remains stationary in knowledge, not

even sceptics or pessimists who, in consequence of that knowledge, assume this or that attitude, adopt this or that form of life. And that very fixing of acquired knowledge, that "retaining" after "understanding," without which (still quoting Dante) "there can be no science," the formation of types and laws and criteria of measurement, the natural sciences and mathematics, to which I have just referred, were a surpassing of the act of theory by proceeding to the act of action. And not only does everyone know from experience, and can always verify by comparison with facts, that this is indeed so; but on consideration, it is evident that things could not proceed otherwise. There was a time (which still exists for not a few unconscious Platonicians, mystics, and ascetics) when it was believed that to know was to elevate the soul to a god, to an Idea, to a world of ideas, to an Absolute placed above the phenomenal human world; and it was natural that when the soul, becoming estranged from itself by an effort against nature, had attained to that superior sphere, it returned confounded to earth, where it could remain perpetually happy and inactive. That thought, which was no longer thought, had for counterpoise a reality that was not reality. But since (with Vico, Kant, Hegel, and other heresiarchs) knowledge has descended to earth, and is no longer conceived as a more or less pallid copy of an immobile reality, but remains always human, and produces, not abstract ideas, but concrete concepts which are syllogisms and historical judgments, perceptions of the real, the practical is no longer something that represents a degeneration of knowledge, a second fall from heaven to earth, or from paradise to hell, nor something that can be resolved upon or abstained from, but is implied in theory itself, as a demand of theory; and as the theory, so the practice. Our thought is historical thought of a his-

torical world, a process of development of a development; and hardly has a qualification of reality been pronounced, when the qualification is already of no value, because it has itself produced a new reality, which awaits a new qualification. A new reality, which is economic and moral life, turns the intellectual into the practical man, the politician, the saint, the man of business, the hero, and elaborates *the a priori logical synthesis into the practical a priori synthesis*; but this is nevertheless always a new feeling, a new desiring, a new willing, a new passionality, in which the spirit can never rest, and solicits above all as new material a new intuition, a new lyricism, a new art.

And thus the last term of the series reunites itself (as I stated at the beginning) with the first term, the circle is closed, and the passage begins again: a passage which is a return of that already made, whence the Vichian concept expressed in the word "return," now become classic. But the development which I have described explains the independence of art, and also the reasons for its apparent dependence, in the eyes of those who have conceived erroneous doctrines (hedonistic, moralistic, conceptualistic, etc.), which I have criticised above, though noting, in the course of criticism, that in each one of them could be found some reference to truth. If it be asked, which of the various activities of the spirit is real, or if they be all real, we must reply that none of them is real; because the only reality is the activity of all these activities, which does not reside in any one of them in particular: of the various syntheses that we have one after the other distinguished,—æsthetic synthesis, logical synthesis, practical synthesis,—the only real one is the *synthesis of syntheses*, the Spirit, which is the true Absolute, the *actus purus*. But from another point of view, and for the same reason, all are real, in the unity of the spirit, in the eternal

going and coming, which is their eternal constancy and reality. Those who see in art the concept, history, mathematics, the type, morality, pleasure, and everything else, are right, because these and all other things are contained within it, owing to the unity of the spirit; indeed, the presence in it of them all, and the energetic unilaterality alike of art as of any other particular form, tending to reduce all activities to one, explains the passage from one form to another, the completing of one form in the other, and it explains development. But those same people are wrong (owing to the distinction, which is the inseparable moment of unity) in the way that they find them all equally abstract or equally confused. Because concept, type, number, measure, morality, utility, pleasure and pain are in art as art, either antecedent or consequent; and therefore are there presupposed (sunk and forgotten there, to adopt a favourite expression of De Sanctis) or as presentiments. Without that presumption, without that presentiment, art would not be art; but it would not be art either (and all the other forms of the spirit would be disturbed by it), if it were desired to impose those values upon art as art, which is and never can be other than pure intuition. The artist will always be morally blameless and philosophically uncensurable, even though his art should indicate a low morality and philosophy: in so far as he is an artist, he does not act and does not reason, but poetises, paints, sings and, in short, expresses himself: were we to adopt a different criterion, we should return to the condemnation of Homeric poetry, in the manner of the Italian critics of the Seicento and the French critics of the time of the fourteenth Louis, who turned up their noses at what they termed "the manners" of those inebriated, vociferating, violent, cruel and ill-educated heroes. The criticism of the philosophy underlying Dante's poem

is certainly possible, but that criticism will enter the subterranean parts of the art of Dante as though by undermining, and will leave intact the soil on the surface, which is the art; Nicholas Macchiavelli will be able to destroy the Dantesque political ideal, recommending neither an emperor nor an international pope as greyhound of liberation, but a tyrant or a national prince; but he will not have eradicated that aspiration from Dante's poem. In like manner, it may be advisable not to show and not to permit to boys and young men the reading of certain pictures, romances, and plays; but this recommendation and act of forbidding will be limited to the practical sphere and will affect, not the works of art, but the books and canvases which serve as instruments for the reproduction of the art, which, as practical works, paid for in the market at a price equivalent to so much corn or gold, can also themselves be shut up in a cabinet or cupboard, and even be burnt in a "pyre of vanities," *à la* Savonarola. To confound the various phases of development in an ill-understood impulse for unity, to make morality dominate art, when and so far as art surpasses morality, or art dominate science, when and so far as science dominates or surpasses art, or has already been itself dominated and surpassed by life: this is what unity well understood, which is also rigorous distinction, should prevent and reject.

And it should prevent and reject it also, because the established order of the various stages of the circle makes it possible to understand not only the independence and the dependence of the various forms of the spirit, but also the *preservation of this order* of the one in the other. It is well to mention one of the problems which present themselves in this place, or rather to return to it, for I have already referred to it fugitively: the relation between fancy

and logic, art and science. This problem is substantially the same as that which reappears as the search for the distinction between *poetry* and *prose*; at any rate, since (and the discovery was soon made, for it is already found in the "Poetic" of Aristotle) it was recognised that the distinction cannot be drawn as between the metrical and the unmetrical, since there can be poetry in prose (for example, romances and plays) and prose in metre (for example, didascalic and philosophic poems). We shall therefore conduct it with the more profound criterion, which is that of image and perception, of intuition and judgment, which has already been explained; poetry will be the expression of the image, prose that of the judgment or concept. But the two expressions, in so far as expressions, are of the same nature, and both possess the same æsthetic value; therefore, if the poet be the lyrist of his feelings, the prosaist is also the lyrist of his feelings,—that is, poet,—though it be of the feelings which arise in him from or in his search for the concept. And there is no reason whatever for recognising the quality of poet to the composer of a sonnet and of refusing it to him who has composed the "Metaphysic," the "Somma Teologia," the "Scienza Nuova," the "Phenomenology of the Spirit," or told the story of the Peloponnesian wars, of the politics of Augustus and Tiberius, or the "universal history": in all of those works there is as much passion and as much lyrical and representative force as in any sonnet or poem. For all the distinctions with which it has been attempted to reserve the poetic quality for the poet and to deny it to the prosaist, are like those stones, carried with great effort to the top of a steep mountain, which fall back again into the valley with ruinous results. Yet there is a just apparent difference, but in order to determine it, poetry and prose must not be separated in the manner of

naturalistic logic, like two co-ordinated concepts simply opposed the one to the other: we must conceive them in development as a passage from poetry to prose. And since the poet, in this passage, not only presupposes a passionate material, owing to the unity of the spirit, but preserves the passionality and elevates it to the passionality of a poet (passion for art), so the thinker or prosaist not only preserves that passionality and elevates it to a passionality for science, but also preserves the intuitive force, owing to which his judgments come forth expressed together with the passionality that surrounds them, and therefore they retain their artistic as well as their scientific character. We can always contemplate this artistic character, assuming its scientific character, or separating it therefrom and from the criticism of science, in order to enjoy the *æsthetic* form which it has assumed; and this is also the reason why science belongs, though in different aspects, to the history of science and to the history of literature, and why, among the many different kinds of poetry enumerated by the rhetoricians, it would at the least be capricious to refuse to number the "poetry of prose," which is sometimes far purer poetry than much pretentious poetry of poetry. And it will be well that I should mention again a new problem of the same sort, to which I have already alluded in passing: namely, the connection between art and morality, which has been denied to be immediate identification of the one with the other, but which must now be reasserted, and to note that, since the poet preserves the passion for his art when free from every other passionality, so he preserves in his art the consciousness of duty (duty toward art), and every poet, in the act of creation, is moral, because he accomplishes a sacred function.

And finally, the order and logic of the various forms of the spirit, making the one necessary for the other and

Place of Art in the Spirit and Human Society 287

therefore all necessary, reveal the folly of negating the one in the name of the other: the error of the philosopher (Plato), or of the moralist (Savonarola or Proudhon), or of the naturalist and practical man (there are so many of these that I do not quote names!), who refute art and poetry; and, on the other hand, the error of the artist who rebels against thought, science, practice, and morality, as did so many "romantics" in tragedy, and as do so many "decadents" in comedy in our day. These are errors and follies to which also we can afford a caress in passing (always keeping in view our plan of not leaving anyone quite disconsolate), for it is evident that they have a positive content of their own in their very negativity, as rebellion against certain false concepts or certain false manifestations of art and of science, of practice and of morality (Plato, for example, combating the idea of poetry as "wisdom"; Savonarola, the not austere and therefore corrupt civilisation of the Italian Renaissance so soon to be dissolved), etc. But it is madness to attempt to prove that were philosophy without art, it would exist for itself, because it would be without what conditions its problems, and air to breathe would be taken from it, in order to make it prevail alone against art; and that practice is not practice, when it is not set in motion and revived by aspirations, and, as they say, by "ideals," by "dear imagining," which is art; and, on the other hand, that art without morality, art that usurps with the decadents the title of "pure beauty," and before which is burnt incense, as though it were a diabolic idol worshipped by a company of devils, owing to the lack of morality in the life from which it springs and which surrounds it, is decomposed as art, and become caprice, luxury, and charlatanry; the artist no longer serves it, but it serves the private and futile interests of the artist as the vilest of slaves.

Nevertheless, objection has been taken to the idea of the circle in general, which affords so much aid in making clear the connection of dependence and independence of art and of the other spiritual forms, on the ground that it thinks the work of the spirit as a tiresome and melancholy doing and undoing, a monotonous turning upon itself, not worth the trouble of effecting. Certainly there is no metaphor but leaves some side open to parody and caricature; but these, when they have gladdened us for the moment, oblige us to return seriously to the thought expressed in the metaphor. And the thought is not that of a sterile repetition of going and coming, but a continuous enrichment in the going of the going and the coming of the coming. The last term, which again becomes the first, is not the old first, but presents itself with a multiplicity and precision of concepts, with an experience of life lived, and even of works contemplated, which was wanting to the old first term; and it affords material for a more lofty, more refined, more complex and more mature art. Thus, instead of being a perpetually even revolution, the idea of the circle is nothing but the true philosophical idea of *progress*, of the perpetual growth of the spirit and of reality in itself, where nothing is repeated, save the form of the growth; unless it should be objected to a man walking, that his walking is a standing still, because he always moves his legs in the same time!

Another objection, or rather another movement of rebellion against the same idea, is frequently to be observed, though not clearly self-conscious: the restlessness, existing in some or several, the endeavour to break and to surpass the circularity that is a law of life, and to attain to a region of repose from movement, so full of anxiety; withdrawn henceforward from the ocean and standing upon the shore, to turn back and contemplate the tossing billows. But I have

already had occasion to state of what this repose consists: an effectual negation of reality, beneath the appearance of elevation and sublimation; and it is certainly attained, but is called death; the death of the individual, not of reality, which does not die, and is not afflicted by its own motion, but enjoys it. Others dream of a spiritual form, in which the circle is dissolved, a form which should be Thought of thought, unity of the Theoretical and of the Practical, Love, God, or whatever other name it may bear; they fail to perceive that this thought, this unity, this Love, this God, already exists in and for the circle, and that they are uselessly repeating a search already completed, or are repeating metaphorically what has already been discovered, in the myth of another world, where the very drama of the only world should be repeated.

I have hitherto outlined this drama, as it truly is, ideal and extratemporal, employing such terms as first and second, solely with a view to verbal convenience and in order to indicate logical order:—ideal and extratemporal, because there is not a moment and there is not an individual in whom it is not all performed, as there is no particle of the universe unbreathed upon by the Spirit of God. But the ideal, indivisible moments of the ideal drama can be seen as if divided in empirical reality, like an impure and embodied symbol of the ideal distinction. Not that they are really divided (ideality is the true reality), but they appear to be so empirically to him who looks upon them with a view to classification, for he possesses no other way of determining in the types the individuality of the facts that have attracted his attention, save that of enlarging and of exaggerating ideal distinctions. Thus the artist, the philosopher, the historian, the naturalist, the mathematician, the man of business, the good man, seem to live separated from one

another; and the spheres of artistic, philosophical, historical, naturalistic, mathematical culture, and those of economic and ethic and of the many institutions connected with them, to be distinct from one another; and finally, the life of humanity is divided into epochs in the ages, in which one or the other or only some of the ideal forms are represented: epochs of fancy, of religion, of speculation, of natural sciences, of industrialism, of political passions, of moral enthusiasms, of pleasure seeking, and so on; and these epochs have their more or less perfect goings and comings. But the eye of the historian discovers the perpetual difference in the uniformity of individuals, of classes, and of epochs; and the philosophical consciousness, unity in difference; and the philosopher-historian sees ideal progress and unity, as also historical progress, in that difference.

But let us, too, speak as empiricists for a moment (so that since empiricism exists it may be of some use), and let us ask ourselves to which of the specimens belongs our epoch, or that from which we have just emerged; what is its prevailing characteristic? To this there will be an immediate and universal reply that it is and has been naturalistic in culture, industrial in practice; and philosophical greatness and artistic greatness will at the same time both be denied to it. But since (and here empiricism is already in danger) no epoch can live without philosophy and without art, our epoch, too, has possessed both, so far as it was capable of possessing them. And its philosophy and its art—the former mediately, the latter immediately—find their places in thought, as documents of what our epoch has truly been in its complexity and interests; by interpreting these, we shall be able to clear the ground upon which must arise our *duty*.

Contemporary art, sensual, insatiable in its desire for enjoyments, furrowed with turbid attempts at an ill-un-

derstood aristocracy, which reveals itself as a voluptuous ideal or an ideal of arrogance and of cruelty, sometimes sighing for a mysticism which is also egoistic and voluptuous, without faith in God and without faith in thought, incredulous and pessimistic,—and often very powerful in its rendering of such states of the soul: this art,—vainly condemned by moralists,—when understood in its profound motives and in its genesis, asks for action, which will certainly not be directed toward condemning, repressing, or rearranging art, but toward directing life more energetically toward a more healthy and more profound morality, which will be mother of a nobler art, and, I would also say, of a nobler philosophy. A more noble philosophy than that of our epoch, incapable of accounting not only for religion, for science, and for itself, but for art itself, which has again become a profound mystery, or rather a theme for horrible blunders by positivists, neocriticists, psychologists, and pragmatists, who have hitherto represented contemporary philosophy, and have relapsed (perhaps in order to acquire new strength and to mature new problems!) into the most childish and most crude conceptions of art.

IV

CRITICISM AND THE HISTORY OF ART

ARTISTIC and literary criticism is often looked upon by artists as a morose and tyrannical *pedagogue* who gives capricious orders, imposes prohibitions, and grants permissions, thus aiding or injuring their works by wilfully deciding upon their fate. And so the artists either shew themselves submissive, humble, flattering, adulatory, toward it, while hating it in their hearts; or, when they do not obtain what they want, or their loftiness of soul forbids that they should descend to those arts of the courtier, they revolt against it, proclaiming its uselessness, with imprecations and mockery, comparing (the remembrance is personal) the critic to an ass that enters the potter's shop and breaks in pieces with *quadrupedante ungulæ sonitu* the delicate products of his art set out to dry in the sun. This time, to tell the truth, it is the artists' fault, for they do not know what criticism is, expecting from it favours which it is not in a position to grant, and injuries which it is not in a position to inflict: since it is clear that since no critic can make an artist of one who is not an artist, so no critic can ever undo, overthrow, or even slightly injure an artist who is really an artist, owing to the metaphysical impossibility of such an act: these things have never happened in the course of history, they do not happen in our day, and we can be sure that they will never happen in the future. But sometimes it is the critics themselves, or the self-styled critics, who do actually present themselves as pedagogues, as oracles, as guides of art, as legislators, seers, and prophets; they command artists to

do this or that, they assign themes to them and declare that certain subjects are poetical, and certain others not; they are discontented with the art at present produced, and would prefer one similar to that prevailing at this or that epoch of the past, or at another of which they declare they catch a glimpse in the near or remote future; they will reprove Tasso for not being Ariosto, Leopardi for not being Metastasio, Manzoni for not being Alfieri, D'Annunzio because he is not Berchet or Fra Jacopone; and they describe the great artist of the future, supplying him with ethic, philosophy, history, language, metric, with architectonic and colouristic processes, and with whatever it may seem to them that he stands in need. And this time it is clear that the blame lies with the critic; and the artists are right in behaving toward such brutality in the way that we behave toward beasts, which we try to tame, to illude and to delude, in order that they may serve us; or we drive them away and send them to the slaughter-house when they are no longer good for any service. But for the honour of criticism we must add that those capricious critics are not so much critics as artists: artists who have failed and who aspire to a certain form of art, which they are unable to attain, either because their aspiration was contradictory, or because their power was not sufficient and failed them; and thus, preserving in their soul the bitterness of the unrealised ideal, they can speak of nothing else, lamenting everywhere its absence, and everywhere invoking its presence. And sometimes, too, they are artists who are anything but failures,—indeed, most felicitous artists,—but, owing to the very energy of their artistic individuality, incapable of emerging from themselves in order to understand forms of art different from their own, and disposed to reject them with violence; they are aided in this negation by the *odium figulinum*, the jealousy

of the artist for the artist, which is without doubt a defect, but one with which too many excellent artists appear to be stained for us to refuse to it some indulgence similar to that accorded to the defects of women, so difficult, as we know, to separate from their good qualities. Other artists should calmly reply to these artist-critics: "Continue doing in your art what you do so well, and let us do what we can do"; and to the artists who have failed and improvised themselves critics: "Do not claim that we should do what you have failed in doing, or what is work of the future, of which neither you nor we know anything." As a fact, this is not the usual reply, because passion forms half of it; but this is indeed the logical reply, which logically terminates the question, though we must foresee that the altercation will not terminate, but will indeed last as long as there are intolerant artists and failures—that is to say, for ever.

And there is another conception of criticism, which is expressed in the magistrate and in the judge, as the foregoing is expressed in the pedagogue or in the tyrant; it attributes to criticism the duty, not of promoting and guiding the life of art,—which is promoted and guided, if you like to call it so, only by history; that is, by the complex movement of the spirit in its historical course,—but simply to separate, in the art which has already been produced, the beautiful from the ugly, and to approve the beautiful and reprove the ugly with the solemnity of a properly austere and conscientious sentence. But I fear that the blame of uselessness will not be removed from criticism, even with this other definition, although perhaps the motive of this blame may to some extent be changed. Is there really need of criticism in order to distinguish the beautiful from the ugly? The production itself of art is never anything but this distinguishing, because the artist arrives at purity of expression precisely by elimi-

nating the ugly which menaces to invade it; and this ugliness is his tumultuous human passions striving against the pure passion of art: his weaknesses, his prejudices, his convenience, his *laissez faire*, his haste, his having one eye on art and another on the spectator, on the editor, on the impresario—all of them things that impede the artist in the physiological bearing and normal birth of his image-expression, the poet of the verse that rings and creates, the painter of sure drawing and harmonious colour, the composer of melody, and introduces into their work, if care be not taken to defend themselves against it, sonorous and empty verses, incorrections, lack of harmony, discordances. And since the artist, at the moment of producing, is a very severe judge of himself from whom nothing escapes,—not even that which escapes others,—others also discern, immediately and very clearly, in the spontaneity of contemplation, where the artist has been an artist and where he has been a man, a poor man; in what works, or in what parts of works, lyrical enthusiasm and creative fancy reign supreme, and in what they have become chilled and have yielded their place to other things, which pretend to be art, and therefore (considered from the aspect of this pretence) are called “ugly.” What is the use of the sentence of criticism, when the sentence has already been given by genius and by taste? Genius and taste are legion, they are people, they are general and secular consensus of opinion. So true is this, that the sentences of criticism are always given too late; they consecrate forms that have already been solemnly consecrated with universal applause (pure applause must not, however, be confounded with the clapping of hands and with social notoriety, the constancy of glory with the caducity of fortune), they condemn ugliness already condemned, grown wearisome and forgotten, or still praised in words, but with a bad conscience,

through prejudice and obstinate pride. Criticism, conceived as a magistrate, kills the dead or blows air upon the face of the living, who is quite lively, in the belief that its breath is that of the God who brings life; that is, it performs a useless task, because this has previously been performed. I ask myself what critics have established the greatness of Dante, of Shakespeare, or of Michelangelo: if, among the legions who have acclaimed and do acclaim these great men, there are or have been men of letters and professional critics, their acclamation does not differ in this case from that of youth and of the people, who are all equally ready to open their hearts to the beautiful, which speaks to all, save sometimes, when it is silent, on discovering the surly countenance of a critic-judge.

And so there arises a third conception of criticism: the criticism of *interpretation* or *comment*, which makes itself small before works of art and limits itself to the duty of dusting, placing in a good light, furnishing information as to the period at which a picture was painted and what it represents, explaining linguistic forms, historical allusions, the presumptions of fact and of idea in a poem; and in both cases, its duty performed, permits the art to act spontaneously within the soul of the onlooker and of the reader, who will then judge of it according as his intimate taste tells him to judge. In this case the critic appears as a cultivated cicerone or as a patient and discreet schoolmaster: "Criticism is the art of teaching to read," is the definition of a famous critic; and the definition has not been without its echo. Now no one contests the utility of guides to museums or exhibitions, or of teachers of reading, still less of erudite guides and masters who know so many things hidden from the majority and are able to throw so much light on subjects. Not only has the art that is most remote from us need of

this assistance, but also that of the nearest past, called contemporary, which, although it treats of subjects and presents forms that seem to be obvious, is yet not always sufficiently obvious; and sometimes a great effort is requisite in order to prepare people to feel the beauty of a little poem or of some work of art, though born but yesterday. Prejudices, habits and forgetfulness form hedges barring the approach to that work: the expert hand of the interpreter and of the commentator is required to remove them. Criticism in this sense is certainly most useful, but we do not see why it should be called criticism when that sort of work already possesses its own name of interpretation, comment, or exegesis. To call this criticism is at best useless, for it is equivocal.

It is equivocal because criticism demands to be, wishes to be and is something different: it does not wish to invade art, nor to rediscover the beauty of the beautiful, or the ugliness of the ugly, nor to make itself small before art, but rather to make itself great before art which is great and, in a certain sense, above it. What, then, is legitimate and true criticism?

First of all, it is *at once all three* of the things that I have hitherto explained; that is to say, all these three things are its necessary conditions, without which it would not arise. Without the moment of art (and, as we have seen, that criticism which affirms itself to be productive or an aid to production, or as repressing certain forms of production to the advantage of certain other forms, is, in a certain sense, art against art), the experience of art would be wanting to the critic, art created within his spirit, severed from non-art, and enjoyed in preference to that. And finally, this experience would be wanting without exegesis, without the removal of the obstacles to reproductive fancy, which supply the spirit with those presumptions of historical knowledge

of which it has need, and which are the wood to burn in the fire of fancy.

But here, before going further, it will be well to resolve a grave doubt which has been agitated and is still agitated, both in philosophical literature and in ordinary thought, and which certainly, where justified, would not only compromise the possibility of criticism, of which I am discoursing, but also of reproductive fancy itself, or taste. Is it truly possible to collect, as does exegesis, the materials required for reproducing the work of art of others (or our own past work of art, when we search our memory and consult our papers in order to remember what we were when we produced it), and to reproduce that work of art in our fancy in its genuine features? Can the collection of the material required be ever complete? And however complete it be, will the fancy ever permit itself to be chained by it in its labour of reproduction? Will it not act as a new fancy, introducing new material? Will it not be obliged to do so, owing to its impotence truly to reproduce the other and the past? Is the reproduction of the individual, of the *individuum ineffabile*, conceivable, when every sane philosophy teaches that the universal alone is eternally reproducible? Will not the reproduction of the works of art of others or of the past be consequently a simple impossibility; and will not what is usually alleged as an undisputed fact in ordinary conversation, and is the expressed or implied presupposition in every dispute upon art, be perhaps (as was said of history in general) *une fable convenue*?

Truly, when we consider the problem rather from without, it will seem most improbable that the firm belief which all possess in the comprehension and intelligence of art is without foundation,—all the more, if we observe that these very people who deny the possibility of reproductions in

abstract theory—or, as they call it, the absoluteness of taste—are yet most tenacious in maintaining their own judgments of taste, and very clearly realise the difference there is between the affirmation that wine pleases or displeases me because it agrees or disagrees with my physiological organism, and the affirmation that a poem is beautiful, and another a *pastiche*: the second order of judgments (as Kant shows in a classical analysis) carries with it the uncoercible pretension to universal validity; souls become passionate about it; and in days of chivalry there were even those who maintained the beauty of the “Gerusalemme,” sword in hand, whereas no one that we know has ever been killed maintaining, sword in hand, that wine was pleasant or unpleasant. To object that works artistically base have yet pleased many or someone, and if not others, their author, is not valid, because their having pleased is not set in doubt (since nothing can be *born* in the soul without the consent of the soul, and consequently without a correlative pleasure); but it is doubted whether that pleasure were æsthetic, and were founded upon a judgment of taste and beauty. And passing from extrinsic scepticism to intrinsic consideration, it should be said that the objection to the conceivability of the æsthetic reproduction is founded upon a reality conceived in its turn as a shock of atoms, or as abstractly monadistic, composed of monads without communication among themselves and harmonised only from without. But that is not reality: reality is spiritual unity, and in spiritual unity nothing is lost, everything is an eternal possession. Not only the reproduction of art, but, in general, the memory of any fact (which is indeed always reproduction of intuitions), would be inconceivable without the unity of the real; and if we had not been ourselves Cæsar and Pompey,—that is, that universal which was once determined as Cæsar and Pompey and is

now determined as ourselves, they living in us,—we should be unable to form any idea of Cæsar and Pompey. And further, the doctrine that individuality is irreproducible and the universal only reproducible is certainly a doctrine of “sound” philosophy, but of sound scholastic philosophy, which separated universal and individual, making the latter an accident of the former (dust carried along by time), and did not know that the true universal is the universal individuated, and that the only true *effable* is the so-called ineffable, the concrete and individual. And finally, what does it matter if we have not always ready the material for reproducing with full exactitude all works of art or any work of art of the past? Fully exact reproduction is, like every human work, an ideal which is realised in infinity, and therefore is always realised in such a manner that it is admitted at every instant of time by the conformation of reality. Is there a suggestion in a poem of which the full signification escapes us? No one will wish to affirm that that suggestion, of which we now have a crepuscular vision that fails to satisfy, will not be better determined in the future by means of research and meditation and by the formation of favourable conditions and sympathetic currents.

Therefore, inasmuch as taste is most sure of the legitimacy of its discussions, by just so much is historical research and interpretation indefatigable in restoring and preserving and widening the knowledge of the past; not mentioning that relativists and sceptics, both in taste and in history, utter their desperate cries from time to time, which do not reduce anyone, not even themselves, as we have seen, to the effectual desperation of not judging.

Closing here this long but indispensable parenthesis and taking up the thread of the discourse, art, historical exegesis, and taste, if they be conditions of criticism, are not yet criti-

cism. Indeed, nothing is obtained by means of that triple presupposition, save the reproduction and enjoyment of the image—expression; that is to say, we return and place ourselves neither more nor less than in the place of the artist-producer in the act of producing his image. Nor can we escape from those conditions, as some boast of doing, by proposing to ourselves to reproduce in a new form the work of the poet and the artist by providing its equivalent; hence they define the critic: *artifex additus artifici*. Because that reproduction in a new garment would be a translation, or a variation, another work of art, to some extent inspired by the first; and if it were the same, it would be a reproduction pure and simple, a material reproduction, with the same words, the same colours, and the same tones—that is, useless. The critic is not *artifex additus artifici*, but *philosophus additus artifici*: his work is not achieved, save when the image received is both preserved and surpassed; it belongs to thought, which we have seen surpass and illumine fancy with new light, make the intuition perception, qualify reality, and therefore distinguish reality from unreality. In this perception, this distinction, which is always and altogether criticism or judgment, the criticism of art, of which we are now especially treating, originates with the question: whether and in what measure the fact, which we have before us as a problem, is *intuition*—that is to say, is real as such; and whether and in what measure, it is not such—that is to say, is unreal: reality and unreality, which in art are called beauty and ugliness, as in logic they are called truth and error, in economy gain and loss, in ethic good and evil. Thus the whole criticism of art can be reduced to this briefest proposition, which further serves to differentiate its work from that of art and taste (which, considered in themselves, are logically mute), and from exegetical erudition (which lacks logi-

cal synthesis, and is therefore also logically mute) : "There is a work of art *a*," with the corresponding negative: "There is not a work of art *a*."

It seems to be a trifle, for the definition of art as intuition seemed to be neither more nor less than a trifle, but it has on the contrary been since seen how many things it included in itself, how many affirmations and how many negations: so many that, although I have proceeded and proceed in a condensed manner, I have not been able and will not be able to afford more than brief mention of them. That proposition or judgment of the criticism of art, "The work of art *a* is," implies, above all, like every judgment, a subject (the intuition of the work of art *a*) to conquer which is needed the labour of exegesis and of fantastic reproduction, together with the discernment of taste: we have already seen how difficult and complicated this is, and how many go astray in it, through lack of fancy, or owing to slightness and superficiality of culture. And it further implies, like every judgment, a predicate, a category, and in this case the category of art, which must be conceived in the judgment, and which therefore becomes the concept of art. And we have also seen, as regards the concept of art, to what difficulties and complications it gives rise, and how it is a possession always unstable, continually attacked and ambushed, and continually to be defended against assaults and ambushes. Criticism of art, therefore, develops and grows, declines and reappears, with the development, the decadence, and the reappearance of the philosophy of art; and each can compare what it was in the Middle Ages (when it may almost be said that it was not) with what it became in the first half of the nineteenth century with Herder, with Hegel, and with the Romantics, in Italy with De Sanctis; and in a narrower field, what it was with De Sanctis, and what it became in the

following period of naturalism, in which the concept of art became clouded and finally confused with physic and with physiology, and even with pathology. And if disagreements as to judgments depend for one half, or less than half, upon lack of clearness as to what the artist has done, lack of sympathy and taste for another half, or more than half, this arises from the small clearness of ideas upon art; whence it often happens that two individuals are substantially at one as to the value of a work of art, save that the one approves what the other blames, because each refers to a different definition of art.

And owing to this dependence of criticism upon the concept of art, as many forms of false criticism are to be distinguished as there are false philosophies of art; and, limiting ourselves to the principal forms of which we have already discoursed, there is a kind of criticism which, instead of reproducing and characterising art, breaks in pieces and classifies it; there is another, moralistic, which treats works of art like actions in respect of ends which the artist proposes or should have proposed to himself; there is hedonistic criticism, which presents art as having attained or failed to attain to pleasure and amusement; there is also the intellectualistic form, which measures progress according to the progress of philosophy, knows the philosophy but not the passion of Dante, judges Ariosto feeble because he has a feeble philosophy, Tasso more serious because his philosophy is more serious, Leopardi contradictory in his pessimism. There is that criticism usually called psychological, which separates content from form, and instead of attending to works of art, attends to the psychology of the artists as men; and there is the other form, which separates form from content and is pleased with abstract forms because, according to cases and to individual sympathies, they recall

antiquity or the Middle Ages; and there is yet another, which finds beauty where it finds rhetorical ornaments; and finally there is that which, having fixed the laws of the kinds and of the arts, receives or rejects works of art according as they approach or retreat from the models which they have formed. I have not enumerated them all, nor had I the intention of so doing, nor do I wish to expound the criticism of criticism, which could be nothing but a repetition of the already traced criticism and dialectic of Æsthetic; and already here and there will have been observed the beginnings of inevitable repetition. It would be more profitable to summarise (if even a rapid summary did not demand too much space) the history of criticism, to place the historical names in the ideal positions that I have indicated, and to shew how criticism of models raged above all during the Italian and French classical periods, conceptualistic criticism in German philosophy of the nineteenth century, that of moralistic description at the period of religious reform or of the Italian national revival, psychology in France with Sainte-Beuve and many others; how the hedonistic form had its widest diffusion among people in society, among boudoir and journalistic critics; that of classifications, in schools, where the duty of criticism is believed to have been successfully fulfilled when the so-called origin of metres and literary and artistic kinds and their representatives has been investigated.

But the forms which I have briefly described are forms of criticism, however erroneous; though this cannot, in truth, be said of other forms which raise their banners and combat among themselves, under the names of "æsthetic criticism" and "historical criticism." These I beg leave to baptise, on the contrary, as they deserve, *pseudo-æsthetic criticism* (or æsthetistic), and *pseudo-historical criticism* (or historisti-

cal). These two forms, though very much opposed, have a common hatred of philosophy in general, and of the concept of art in particular: against any intervention of thought in the criticism of art, which in the opinion of the former is the affair of artistic souls; in the opinion of the latter, of the erudite. In other words, they debase criticism below criticism, the former limiting it to pure taste and enjoyment of art, the latter to pure exegetical research or preparation of materials for reproduction by the fancy. What *Æsthetic*, which implies thought and concept of art, can have to do with pure taste without concept is difficult to say; and what history can have to do with disconnected erudition relative to art, which is not organisable as history because without a concept of art and ignorant of what art is (whereas history demands always that we should know that of which we narrate the history), is yet more difficult to establish; at the most we could note the reasons for the strange "fortune" which those two words have experienced. But there would be no harm in those names or in the refusal to exercise criticism, provided that the upholders of both should remain within the boundaries assigned by themselves, these enjoying works of art, those collecting material for exegesis; and they might leave criticism to him who should wish to criticise, or satisfy themselves with speaking ill of it without touching problems which properly belong to criticism. In order to attain to such an attitude of reserve it would be necessary neither more nor less than that the *æsthètes* should never open their mouths in ecstasy about art, that they should silently degustate their joys, and, at the most, that when they met their like they should understand one another, as animals are said to do (who knows, though, if it be true!) without speaking: their countenance unconsciously bearing an expression of ravishment, their arms outstretched in an attitude of

wonder, or their hands joined in a prayer of thanksgiving for the joy experienced, should suffice for everything. Historians, for their part, might certainly speak: speak of codices, of corrections, of chronical and of topical dates, of political facts, of biographical occurrences, of sources of works, of language, of syntaxes, of metres, but never of art, which they serve, but to whose countenance, as simple erudites, they cannot raise their eyes, as the maid-servant does not raise them to look upon her mistress, whose clothes she nevertheless brushes and whose food she prepares: *sic vos, non vobis*. But go and ask of men such abstentions, sacrifices, and heroisms, however extravagant in their ideas and fanatic in their extravagances! In particular, go and ask those who, for one or another reason, are occupied with art all their lives, not to talk of or to judge art! But the mute æsthetisticians talk of, judge, and argue about art, and the inconclusive historians do the same; and since in thus talking they are without the guide of philosophy and of the *concept* of art, which they despise and abhor, and yet have need of a concept,—when good sense does not fortunately happen to suggest the right one to them, without their being aware of it,—they wander among all the various *preconceptions*, moralistic and hedonistic, intellectualistic and contentistic, formalistic and rhetorical, physiological and academical, which I have recorded, now relying upon this one, now upon that, now confounding them all and contaminating one with the other. And the most curious spectacle (though to be foreseen by the philosopher) is that the æsthetisticians and historians, those irreconcilable adversaries, although they start from opposite points, yet agree so well that they end by uttering the same fatuities; and nothing is more amusing than to meet again the most musty intellectualistic and moralistic ideas in the pages of deeply moved lovers of

art (so deeply moved as to hate thought), and in the most positive historians (so positive as to fear compromising their positivity by attempting to understand the object of their researches, which chances this time to be called art).

True criticism of art is certainly *æsthetic* criticism, but not because it disdains philosophy, like pseudo-*æsthetic*, but because it acts as philosophy and as conception of art; it is *historical* criticism, not because, like pseudo-history, it deals with the extrinsic of art, but because, after having availed itself of historical data for fantastic reproduction (and till then it is not yet history), when fantastic reproduction has been obtained, *it becomes history*, by determining what is that fact which has been reproduced in the fancy, and so characterising the fact by means of the concept, and establishing what exactly is the fact that has occurred. Thus, the two things at variance in spheres inferior to criticism coincide in criticism; and "*historical criticism of art*" and "*æsthetic criticism*" are the same: it is indifferent which word we use, for each may have its special use solely for reasons of convenience, as when, for instance, it is desired to call special attention, with the first, to the necessity of the understanding of art; with the second, to the historical objectivity of its consideration. Thus the problem discussed by certain methodologists is solved, namely, whether history enter into the criticism of art as means or as end: since it is henceforth clear that history adopted as a means is not history, precisely because it is a means, but is exegetic material; and that which enters it as end is certainly history, though it does not enter it as a particular element, but as its constituent whole: which precisely describes the word "end."

But if criticism of art be historical criticism, it follows that it will not be possible to limit the duty of discerning the beautiful and the ugly to simple approval and refusal in

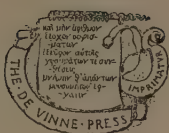
the immediate consciousness of the artist when he produces, or of the man of taste when he contemplates; it must widen and elevate itself to what is called *explanation*. And since in the world of history (which is, indeed, the only world) negative or privative facts do not exist, what seems to taste to be ugly and repugnant, because not artistic, will be neither ugly nor repugnant to historical consideration, because it knows that what is not artistic yet is *something else*, and has its right to existence as truly as it has existed. The virtuous Catholic allegory composed by Tasso for his "Gerusalemme" is not artistic, nor the patriotic declamation of Niccolini and Guerrazzi, nor the subtleties and conceits which Petrarch introduced into his poems; but Tasso's allegory is one of the manifestations of the work of the Catholic counter-reform in the Latin countries; the declamations of Niccolini and of Guerrazzi were violent attempts to rouse the souls of Italians against the priest and the stranger, representing adhesion to the manner of that arousing; the subtleties and conceits of Petrarch, the cult of traditional troubadour elegance, revived and enriched in the new Italian civilisation; that is to say, they are all practical facts, very significant historically and worthy of respect. We can well continue to talk of the beautiful and of the ugly, in the field of historical criticism, through vivacity of language, or in order to chime with current parlance; provided that we shew at the same time, or hint, or let be understood, or at least do not exclude, the positive content, both of that beautiful and of that ugly, which will never be so radically *condemned* in its ugliness as when it is *fully justified and understood*, because in this case it will be removed in the most radical manner from the sphere proper to art.

For this reason, criticism of art, when truly æsthetic or historical, becomes at the same time amplified into a *criti-*

cism of life, since it is not possible to judge—that is, to characterise—works of art without at the same time judging and characterising the works of the whole life: as we observe with the truly great critics, and above all with De Sanctis, in his “History of Italian Literature” and in his “Critical Essays,” who is as profound a critic of art as of philosophy, morality, and politics; he is profound in the one because profound in the other, and inversely: the strength of his pure æsthetic consideration of art is the strength of his pure moral consideration of morality. Because the forms of the spirit, of which criticism avails itself as categories of judgment, although ideally distinguishable in unity, are not materially separable from one another and from unity, under penalty of seeing them vanish before us. We cannot, therefore, speak of a distinction of art from other criticism, save in an empirical manner, to indicate that the attention of the speaker or writer is directed to one rather than to another part of his indivisible argument. And the distinction is also empirical (I have hitherto preserved this here, in order to proceed with didactic clearness) between *criticism* and *history* of art: a distinction which has been specially determined by the fact that a polemical element prevails in the study of contemporary art and literature, which causes it to be more readily called “criticism,” while in that of the art and literature of a more remote period prevails the narrative tone, and therefore it is more readily termed “history.” In reality, true and complete *criticism* is the serene *historical narration of what has happened*; and history is the only true criticism that can be exercised upon the doings of humanity, which cannot be not-facts, since they have happened, and are not to be dominated by the spirit otherwise than by *understanding them*. And since the criticism of art has shewn itself inseparable from other criticism, so the history of art

can be separated from the complete history of human civilisation only for reasons of a literary nature, among which it certainly follows its own law, which is art, but from which it receives the historical movement, which belongs to the spirit as a whole, never to one form of the spirit separated from the others.

BENEDETTO CROCE.



CONTENTS

Vol. II SEPTEMBER, 1915 No. 1

THE STUDY OF POETRY—A discourse prepared for the inauguration of the Rice Institute, by John William Mackail, M.A., LL.D., formerly Professor of Poetry in Oxford University.	PAGE
I. The Function of a University	1
II. What is Poetry?	10
III. The Modern World	20
IV. Poetry and Science	30
V. Poetry and Business	38
VI. Poetry and Democracy	45

Vol. II OCTOBER, 1915 No. 2

THE INTRODUCTION OF WESTERN LEARNING INTO JAPAN—A lecture prepared for the inauguration of the Rice Institute, by the Right Honorable Baron Dairoku Kikuchi, <i>Rigakuhakushi</i> , M.A., LL.D., Privy Councilor, President of the Imperial Academy, Honorary Professor of the Imperial University of Tokyo	55
---	----

Vol. II NOVEMBER, 1915 No. 3

THE SYSTEM OF THE SCIENCES; PRINCIPLES OF THE THEORY OF EDUCATION—Two lectures prepared for the inauguration of the Rice Institute, by Privy Councilor Professor Wilhelm Ostwald, late Professor of Chemistry in the University of Leipsic, Nobel Laureate in Chemistry, 1909	101
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